

HELENE

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

GRAND HOTEL
RESULTS OF AN ACCIDENT
SECRET SENTENCE
MARTIN'S SUMMER
FALLING STAR
MEN NEVER KNOW
CAREER
A TALE FROM BALI
NANKING ROAD
CENTRAL STORES
THE SHIP AND THE SHORE
GRAND OPERA
ONCE IN VIENNA

VICKI BAUM

HELENE

GEOFFREY BLES

52 DOUGHTY STREET, BLOOMSBURY, LONDON

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THE young girl sat in a fourth-class carriage of a local train, which was making its way with considerable speed through the night, in order to reach the main station at Frankfurt at the scheduled time. The February night seemed to consist entirely of black glass, lit occasionally by flashes from the windows of passing trains and then becoming opaque again, streaked with black rivulets of rain blown on small gusts of wind from the north-east. The air in this fourth-class carriage was heavy beneath the small, gloomy gas-jets and the panes were fogged with the breath of sleeping humanity. The young girl, Fräulein Willfüer—a student of chemistry, to be exact—was not, however, asleep, but was sitting upright on the seat, with a tired and yet alert expression on her face. She had given up her corner seat to a woman who was holding a baby on her lap and was apparently expecting another child; a young, worn-out, working woman, who let her mouth fall open in sleep and was continually sinking forward, so that the baby was in constant danger of falling, and each time Fräulein Willfüer came to the rescue and prevented the fall. This was on her left. On her right sat an old man who smelt unpleasantly and pillowed his head on her shoulder in order to sleep comfortably. Opposite her was a youth dreaming some terrible dream that caused him to bare his teeth.

Although none of this was particularly pleasing, and although Helene Willfüer herself had good cause for

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sadness, she suddenly started to smile. Alone and awake amid these pitiful sleeping bundles of humanity, she was forced to smile—at these people as well as at herself. Behind her smile there was, however, something else—triumph, success, an obstacle overcome. “I have done it,” she thought; and the rattle of the windows and the clack of the wheels over the track took up the thought and echoed it rhythmically in her brain. As the train increased its speed on nearing its destination, the refrain was shortened, and to an ever-quickening accompaniment of “Done, done, done it,” Helene Willfüer rose and gathered together her luggage.

Lights, signals, shrieks from the engine, the mirror of the River Main below, a prolonged rumble over a bridge between the first houses of a large town. Helene’s neighbours wakened and exchanged a few words with one another. Did the young lady live there? asked the youth sitting opposite her. No, she was changing there, and going further, said Fräulein Willfüer. What a pity! He would have liked to have shown her the way, said the youth. The young mother asked in a husky voice if the young lady would hold the child for a moment.

“Yes, certainly, with pleasure.”

The girl stood, somewhat cramped for space, with the child on her arm. It was strange to be holding this tiny breathing, sleeping atom of warmth. It was delightful, there was a peculiar kind of happiness in it: the sort of happiness one feels when one listens to a bird, or strokes a puppy, or sees a chestnut leaf that yesterday was no more than a sticky bud and to-day has stretched out green downy fingers which glisten and gently stir in the sunlight.

With such feelings as these, Fräulein Willfüer, who had the gift of appreciating happiness, bent over the tiny little head and drank in the beauty of the little parted lips,

the shining delicacy of the skin, the warmth, the life—and when her timidly offered finger was firmly and trustingly clasped in a minute damp fist, her heart responded with a small inward throb. It was a very special and wonderfully beautiful experience.

Meanwhile, the jolt of arrival had thrown the passengers against each other. The child was taken from Helene's arms. She grasped her baggage and also the basket of the unknown mother, and helped her down the black steps, which were dripping wet. Once outside, she was immediately enveloped in the gloomy nocturnal atmosphere of the station, with its dark confusion of shivering people and the white banners of steam under its sooty glass roof. It was only when Helene Willfüer began to move, with her bag, towards another platform, that she realised how tired she was; terribly tired, indescribably tired—and small wonder, considering the days she had gone through. And now, too, she realised that the numb, worrying, nervous sensation that had been tormenting her for some time was nothing more nor less than hunger. She mentally reviewed her financial resources and, after a moment's hesitation, approached a small buffet where refreshments could be obtained even during the night. A great copper full of steaming sausages decided her, and she pushed forward a little against the people standing in front of her, urged by the sudden intensity of her hunger. It's true, she thought, excusing herself, I haven't eaten anything for two days.

Not very far from her she saw the back of a man who had just bought some cigars; the broad back of a huge man, dressed in a grey coat of foreign cut. He was lighting a cigar behind his sheltering hand, and in the light of the match his profile—a good and strong profile—stood out sharply against the background of shadows. When Helene saw this face, when she recognised the profile,

the back, and the coat, her strength deserted her in a most unreasonable manner and she was forced by a blissful sensation of weakness to put down her bag. And, quite unconsciously, she smiled.

There was no reason for this access of emotion, for this sudden elation in the midst of so much gloom—no reason at all. The giant in the grey coat was simply Professor Ambrosius, a chemist by profession, famous for his work on dye-stuffs, and Helene Willfüer could claim no closer relationship with him than that of a grateful and adoring pupil. The sight of him, moreover, was no rare occurrence; she enjoyed it daily in college and during practical work and laboratory inspection, and occasionally when small social occasions brought her in contact with her Professor. But having been away for a few days, she had been deprived of these customary glimpses and she stood there now, deeply stirred and excited.

Ambrosius, when he turned round with his cigar in his mouth, recognised her at once, and greeted her cordially.

"Ah! Fräulein Willfüer! Have you been away?"

"Yes, Professor."

"H'm. I noticed your empty seat in the lab. Well, and now you are on your way back again?"

"Yes," said Helene.

She had immediately given up the idea of eating sausages, and was walking along beside the Professor. She was far from small and she took long strides, but he was as tall as a tower and threw an endless, endless shadow on the wet platform. Even this shadow gave Helene pleasure in the confusion of her heart.

"Good. Then we can travel together," said Ambrosius. "I was dreading the journey. That's fine. Train journeys make me nervous. I am always afraid——"

"Afraid? You, Professor?"

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"Yes, I. Certainly. I am always afraid of a railway accident. Or of some catastrophe or other; the explosion of a gasometer, an earthquake—I don't know what. For years I have had this sense of catastrophe in me. Well, well—don't look at me as though I were the Dalai Lama! We will travel together, and you can tell me what your father is doing. I suppose you are on your way from home?"

"Yes," she answered, briefly.

"There, the train is already signalled. It doesn't look as though it's going to be full."

"I—I'm afraid I can't travel with you, Professor," said Fräulein Willfüer quietly. "I must wait. I am going by the slow train at 12.5."

"What? Slow train? Why? Rubbish!" said Ambrosius. Suddenly he began to laugh. "Are funds so short?" he asked with amusement.

"Yes, Professor."

"Well, that's nothing. We must talk to your father and tell him to add something to them, eh?"

"My father—is dead," said Fräulein Willfüer, and the four words sounded harsh and disjointed. Ambrosius stood still and grasped both her hands.

"Good gracious me," he said, "my child—my dear Fräulein Willfüer—what's that? Your father—dead? So that's why you went away? I never read the newspapers. That's hard lines on you!"

"Yes," said Helene. She kept the corners of her mouth firmly closed so that they should not tremble, and bravely dragged her bag along with her, although now she felt a little dizzy.

"But there is your train, Professor," she added, and began to move away from him. Until now it had been so warm, so sheltered, walking along beside that tower of a man.


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"Very well. Now you shall travel with me. That's settled. Get in," said Ambrosius. "What? You've no ticket? Never mind that. I've got a ticket for you. I wouldn't dream of leaving you alone now. Slow train—rubbish! Fourth class in a goods train probably! Of course, I thought as much. Here you are. Here's a nice empty compartment. There—and now we'll draw the curtains, so that we shall be left in peace. Is it warm enough for you? Now, put your feet up and leave your bag out there, so. That's all right now, isn't it?"

Yes, that was like Ambrosius. When he was about, everything was all right. Helene closed her eyes for a moment and breathed a deep sigh of relief. She was safely seated on comfortable brown plush cushions, a two hours' journey with Ambrosius before her; an eternity, a joy without end. But that was the way with Life—now and again things went so well, that out of the deepest darkness sprang up happiness, unforeseen, profound and penetrating. Unexpectedly Fräulein Willfüer thought of Yvonne Pastouri, the Professor's wife; a *svelte* and bewitchingly beautiful creature, who had at one time travelled all over the world as a famous violinist, and now held court in his villa—a strange and fascinating figure in the sedate life of the university town. Fräulein Willfüer thought no more than fleetingly of her. She merely reflected that Frau Pastouri Ambrosius had Professor Ambrosius for her husband, and then the vague picture was gone. Strange to relate, the Professor was also thinking of his wife at that moment. He thought of her, in fact, at the very moment when Fräulein Willfüer hesitatingly put her feet up on the seat. Helene Willfüer was wearing thick, warm stockings and clumsy, somewhat worn shoes. She wore a heavy, dark brown coat with a mourning band on the sleeve, and a cheap little felt hat, which shaded her weary face. Ambrosius took in these

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details, and it occurred to him that this Willfüer was a brave creature, and a poor little thing. He was not particularly attracted by that type of homely beauty. That afternoon he had visited with his wife a big dressmaker's establishment, where she had had evening dresses paraded before her. Very distinctly at that moment, Professor Ambrosius visualised his wife's shoulders and the way in which they rose from the silken folds of a dress.

The train had hardly started before the guard appeared to punch the tickets, and the Professor actually produced two tickets, much to Helene Willfüer's amazement.

"There you are. I told you I had a ticket for you," he said cheerfully. "No magic! Nothing up my sleeve! It is my wife's return ticket—all very simple. She preferred to remain in Frankfurt with friends."

"Yes," he added afterwards, as though in answer to some unspoken question, and then he turned his whole attention to Helene Willfüer, grasped her two hands warmly and said: "Well, now you must tell me all that has happened to you."

"There is so little to tell, Professor. There are things one cannot talk about, and the actual happenings are so trivial and are over so quickly that one is left quite stupid and confused. I don't think I have realised everything, even yet. My father is dead—beyond that there is nothing. . . ."

"What was the matter with him?"

"Inflammation of the lungs. First of all a telegram arrived. I went home. He was feverish. We talked a lot. I did not understand that he was so ill. They said it was only the bronchial tubes. In three days he was dead."

"Did he . . . I mean—was it very hard for him?"

"No, I don't think he suffered much. He was tired, and then he became strange, and didn't want to have anything more to do with us. And then, quite suddenly, it

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was all over. I was terribly upset, Professor. I had never seen anyone die before. I cannot believe that one must die—even now I can't. I have always just lived—I have always imagined that life was eternal."

"It is. Life *is* eternal, Fräulein Willfüer," said Ambrosius.

"Is it?" she replied, and looked at him trustingly.

There was something childlike and warming in her glance and in the little question: something which made the Professor feel as happy as she herself had felt a short time previously with the baby's little fist in her hand.

"We will assume that it is," he said. "Yes, we will believe that there is something eternal in life beyond the individual. You know that new stars are born every second. Not merely new people, no, but new stars, young and burning, which will make new paths in the cosmos—circles, ellipses, parabolas. . . . But I am poaching on my colleague Bihlmayer's preserves there, and we wanted to talk of ourselves. Your father was a wonderful man. But we haven't lost him for ever. His pupils, his work, remain. And some of his personality must surely live in yourself?"

"Yes—I will do my best, Professor."

"And what is going to happen to your studies now? Are you—in difficulties? Are—I mean—are circumstances changed?" asked Ambrosius.

"Difficulties? Oh, yes! But I have managed it. I have managed to arrange things so that I can finish my studies," said Helene, and smiled under her cheap little felt hat. "It was very difficult. Of course, there is no money, and I'm not on the best of terms with my step-mother. But I came of age last year. There is still a small legacy from my mother and with that I should be able to struggle along to my finals. I have reckoned it all out,

and it can be managed. Good gracious, things haven't been exactly luxurious up to now; they'll just have to be a little more economical still, that's all. I'll coach a few students in physics and earn a bit that way. I shall soon be taking my exam in organic chemistry, and then in a year I hope to have finished. That is if I work hard. My uncle wanted me to finish my studies with that exam and get a job as a laboratory assistant or dispenser. But then the sparks flew! No, I'm *not* going to be dragged away from my studies—I won't give way on that point. I'm obstinate, thank heaven!"

Ambrosius was forced to smile a little when he looked at Helene Willfüer's face. Really only a child still, he thought. She ought to be going to dances and flirting, playing tennis, wearing pretty clothes, having a good time—instead of which she was studying chemistry. God had surely devised different paradises for different people. . . .

Since he remained silent, Helene leant forward, clasped her hands together and asked, not without anxiety in her tone:

"I was right, wasn't I, Professor?"

"You look at me as though you expected me to prophesy for you. I don't know whether you were right or not, Fräulein Willfüer. I'm sure I hope so, but I don't know. Probably you were right. That's the way you are made, with your obstinacy and your passion for *Bilirubin* or  $C_{12}H_{10}O_2N_2$ . You're certainly capable enough, but I know no more about you than that. Until you start working independently I can know no more about you. As long as they follow Gattermann, page 179, in his disquisition on aniline dyes, all students are good. It is only when they begin to work on their theses that one can tell. I hope that you will do some individual work. After all, you are Willfüer's child, and, anyway, it isn't absolutely essential for you to become a Madame Curie.

Geniuses are rare, and geniuses do not need to take a degree."

"But one must have a goal, Professor. I must always have some object towards which I can steer dead straight."

"There you are! You say 'dead straight.' Now, that is just what I, personally, do not care for so much. In the case of young ladies, most certainly not. With them a zigzag is much more attractive, and more human. Yes, Fräulein Willfüer, more human. Of course, you are very young, and young people are hard, and full of great ideals. But, believe an old man, it is the bypaths that make life precious. All the same, just try and carry on 'dead straight.' I most certainly do not wish to discourage you. But I, for my part, am all for the bypaths."

Yes, you! thought Fräulein Willfüer, it's easy enough for you, Herr Ambrosius, with your villa and your money and your fame, and your beautiful wife—your second wife, too! That's what you mean by bypaths, I suppose. People like you have an easy time, but people like me have to travel fourth class and by the shortest route—anything else is a luxury. When one of us is hungry and buys a couple of sausages at a station buffet, it is a luxury and scarcely permissible.

She settled herself on the plush cushions and looked at Ambrosius. He, meanwhile, was lost in his own thoughts with his head bowed forward as though under a burden. His eyelids reddened as they had done before, and the line of his upper lip had something miserable, tormented or pained about it, which he quickly concealed when he felt his pupil's glance upon him. He pulled himself together so noticeably that Helene was shocked and thought to herself—no, perhaps even you do not find things easy, Herr Ambrosius; perhaps somewhere deep down within you, you, too, are only a poor devil like the rest of us!

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"And so you are quite independent and entirely alone?" asked the Professor.

"Yes. Now I am all alone," Helene began; and as she said this, her mouth commenced to tremble unexpectedly.

She had not wept at the death of her father, nor at his funeral. She had been hard, hard as a stone, and God alone knew how she had suffered from this inability to weep. Her throat ached from it, and her breathing hurt her, and her heart was strangled, but the tears would not come. But now, at the word "alone," and under the gaze of her teacher, something inside her began to melt, and her mouth trembled in her overtired face.

"You were very attached to your father?" asked Ambrosius sympathetically.

"He was everything to me—everything," said Fräulein Willfüer, and at that moment the barrier broke down and flooded her with tears, with a blessed, relieving, rushing flood of tears. She let them run down her face without trying to stop them. She was grateful for these liberated tears, she almost enjoyed them and gave herself up to them. In a strange confusion of feeling she ascribed everything to Ambrosius—the pain and the relief, the loss and the gain, and her gratitude for the outbreak. Ambrosius sat beside her, not a little embarrassed yet touched, and quite helpless before a woman's tears.

"Child," he said, troubled, "my dear child! Poor child! Calm yourself. Be brave. Everything passes. It will be all right. You are so capable."

For the second time that evening he said this, and he repeated it emphatically, as a consolation. But this capable Fräulein Willfüer had lost all self-control and restraint. She clung limp and shaken to his hands and whispered again and again through the deluge:

“Thank you. I’m all right. It’s quite all right. Thank you . . . thank you . . . thank you . . .”

Close before her eyes were his hands that she knew so well from lectures and experiments. Along the back of the right hand there ran a broad, whitish, scarred patch—the remains of a corrosive burn. She was so overtired, starved and weakened that she just let herself go and, between tears and words of thanks, simply placed her lips on this scar and kissed the Professor’s hand.

This was more than embarrassing. Ambrosius pretended that he had not noticed it, but he drew his hands away and thrust both of them in his trouser pockets, where they would be safe for the time being. However, Helene was now relieved, eased in mind, almost happy, and she regained her composure.

“Will you be coming to the lectures again to-morrow? I shall be talking on pyridin,” said Ambrosius.

“Yes, of course. I have missed quite enough already,” Helene answered sensibly.

It was only then that she realised how indescribably tired she was. Her eyes closed and the walls of the compartment started a kind of dance.

The Professor saw what was happening.

“You ought to try and sleep now, otherwise you won’t be fit for the lecture to-morrow,” he said with authority.

Fräulein Willfüer protested against this inwardly, for she wanted to savour the pleasure of this journey together to the full, and with all her senses alive. But although she protested inwardly, she was already lying back in her corner and quite suddenly she went to sleep like a tired child. The little felt hat slipped to one side, her head sank back, and the light fell full on her straight, clear forehead and her upturned throat. Her eyelids were closed under her strong eyebrows, and her parted mouth looked very young and, as she slept, full of gentleness.

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Her breast was delicately outlined beneath her coat as it rose and fell with her breathing. Ambrosius, who still felt the kiss on the back of his hand, looked at the girl lying there and thought wonderingly, "Why, she, too, is a woman! And almost beautiful. But that is neither here nor there. . . ."

Fräulein Willfüer's hands were the last to go to sleep. They still lay alert and fully conscious on her lap when she herself was fast asleep. They were large, strong, work-worn hands. They were stained yellow with nitric acid and black with silver nitrate. In the hollow between thumb and forefinger the skin was red, raw, and inflamed as the result of experiments. The nails were cut short and unmanicured. Yet the hand had breeding and character as it lay there, clenched, full of strength and defiance. Finally it relaxed and sank down, loose, weak and gentle—and then it, too, slept, the diligent hand of Helene Willfüer, student of chemistry.









BEFORE us lies the old University town, with its confusion of roofs, its towers, its steep paths and its castle up on the hill, with the river below and the noble curve of the old bridge spanning the valley. So familiar has this scene been made by thousands of good and bad pictures that any further description is superfluous. Nestling between the hills, whose tree-tops are now showing the first reddish tints of early March, the town looks like a little paradise of tender enchantment. Even those barbarians who have not studied here are familiar with the peculiar charm of this town from students' songs and stories. They have learnt that here the most important things in life are to sing a great deal, to love, to drink, to fight duels, and to play the fool with a light heart. It may be so. It may be that that spirit of yesterday still holds sway. It may be that in the students' clubs courage is still sought in the traditional manner at the bottom of beer mugs and put to the test on the fencing floor. But that is no concern of ours. It is not that which lies near our hearts ; and had we conceived the idea of painting a picture of vigorous youth, it would have been in the forms and fortunes of other and very different people that the picture would have taken shape. Not then would this town have seemed to lie before us like an exposed brain—a quivering, feverish, restless workshop of the spirit, an organism in which every hour gives birth with pain to some new thing ; learning, research, understanding, knowledge. . . .

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It was six o'clock in the morning ; damp, cold, grey and overcast. On the plains beyond the town the first factory sirens were hooting and already lights were twinkling in the little houses on the slopes of the hill. Some people have no difficulty in getting up, as for instance Fräulein Willfüer, who sat up in bed completely rested and wide awake at the first tinkle of her alarm clock. She always got out of bed right foot first ; then put the water on the spirit stove for her breakfast cup of tea, and then poured cold water over her tall body, uttering little gasps and cries of pleasure as she did so. But Gudula Rapp, student of philology, who shared Helene's " digs " with her, woke up with a headache—for she had been sitting over her archæological thesis until late into the night—and groaned with fatigue. Her eyelids drooped over her large eyes and her small owl-like face, with its shiny black hair, wore an old and sorrowful expression. It was not until Helene Willfüer was already on her way to knock up Marx, the student of natural history (whom she was coaching in physics every morning from seven to eight), that the moral struggle in Gudula Rapp ceased, with the victory of the better half, so that she left her narrow student's bed and in her turn disappeared behind the screen which hid the wash-stand.

There are others again—among them the medical student Fritz Rainer—who succumb in this daily struggle. Weaklings, living on their nerves, they are good for nothing in the early morning and sink back again and huddle themselves up in the troubled sleep of a bad conscience. They sit up suddenly with a shock, when it is too late to hurry through their preparation for the day's study and too late for the first lecture which the old Professor is to give at eight o'clock on Descriptive Anatomy.

Young Marx belonged to yet another class. He was

one of the punctilious ones. His room was tidy by the time Fräulein Willfür appeared at seven o'clock. It was cold, but well aired. He had done his exercises in front of an open window, had shaved his youthful beard, and had already prepared his work. Helene, not without reason, cherished a certain motherly affection for this slight, boyish youth. At eight o'clock they strolled together to the small lecture-hall, where a dull tutor was to give a tedious but necessary lecture on geology. And owing to the narrow limits of the University quarter there was even time for Marx to go a little out of his way. He went past the house in which his fiancée lived—for he was officially engaged, with the consent of her parents, to Friedel Mannsfeldt. He whistled, and at a window up above there appeared for a second the sweet, flower-like face of eighteen-year-old Friedel, who blew him a kiss.

Professor Ambrosius was also awake. It was cold in his room, too. He lived in a kind of island in his luxuriously furnished villa—a typical man's room which was separated from his wife's room by a beautifully fitted bathroom. He listened for a short time at her door and even carefully turned the handle; but Yvonne Pastouri Ambrosius had locked the door.

The Professor sighed, thrust his hands into his pockets, raised himself on tiptoe, clenched his fists, threw out his immense chest and drew breath through his teeth. Troubles have got to be fought down, he thought. He breakfasted alone and went out alone into the now brightening misty morning, down towards the town. For half an hour he sat doing nothing in his private laboratory, staring at the stands of pipettes. Then his assistant Meier arrived. This Meier was also known as Hefty Meier and Plain Meier. He announced that it was time for the lecture, and as he did so his ears, which stood out from his head, seemed to go blue with respectful

reverence. The Professor hung up his overall, went across to the lecture room and plunged into the cheerful noise of greetings as into a refreshing bath. Immediately he filled the whole lofty room, right up to the skylight still darkened by the dim morning light, with the sound of his voice and the immense force of his lecturing.

Meanwhile, Yvonne Pastouri lay under her silken eiderdown and dreamed a fascinating dream in which she flew up to the Königstuhl with Dr. Kolding, the bank director—just like that, without any aeroplane. It was a delightful experience. At ten o'clock she awoke, had breakfast in bed, read a few letters and eventually rang up May Kolding to ask when her nice brother would come over again from Frankfurt in his car.

May Kolding, who was by no means dull and shone as quite a star in her own circle, was also still in bed and listened with a knowing expression on her face. May Kolding was also a student. She was studying modern languages, and one day she intended to translate Balzac afresh and to write an extensive biography of him, full of new ideas, new research and new conclusions. For the present she travelled at regular intervals to Paris to study. She was in no hurry to take her degree. She had time, she had money, and the student's life pleased her. She was quite content to live in a very pleasant *pension*, to attend a few interesting lectures, to dance often at the Schloss Hotel with its cosmopolitan society, to make interesting acquaintances and to be thought interesting herself.

"Why, yes, Yvonne," she said over the telephone, "that's a very good idea. I will tell Fred he must come over again in his car. . . ."

But was that all that happened that morning between six and ten o'clock? Not by a long way. It was only a minute section. It was just as though among the con-

fusion of roofs on the hill slopes there were a few roofs of glass through which one could look. That was not all—that a few people shivered, hungered, fought duels, worked, thought in their rooms. A great deal more than that happened, a very great deal. Just take the lecture rooms, those cells of learning each with a man standing in its centre who had accumulated knowledge that he might impart it to others. There was the whole seething, struggling, impatient, insatiable world of learning, perpetually bubbling and all-devouring. In one room was being exhibited a tumour of the brain which would probably prove fatal, in another a relief map of the Jordan. There were people at work calculating oscillations, refractions, rays, energies, the paths of the planets; experimenting, demonstrating, peering through microscopes, studying clauses and laws, formulating hypotheses, reaching out beyond themselves and sometimes reaching into the void. In one retort a crystal was forming out of green vapours—to-morrow the world would talk of it. The biologist von Stetten never put out his lamp before eight o'clock each morning; for six years he had been seeking a serum against a particular parasitic disease of the respiratory tract. Dr. Jonas, the philologist, who came back from the war suffering from paralysis of the nerves and lay like a heavy, dead log of wood in his bed, was working at an immense new translation of the Bible. The physicist Bihlmayer had contracted mercurial poisoning. He had become an old, toothless man, with sore mucous membranes and a fatally diseased intestine. He would die just before reaching his goal. And the anatomy servant, Hörselmann, out of sheer love of science, sat up every night until three o'clock piecing together skeletons. . . .

Then—to mention but one thing—there were the hospitals. They filled a complete street. They made up

their own quarter of the town, a parish of their own. Houses, houses, houses, in which were pain and torment, layer upon layer; storehouses of suffering, of invalids, of pathological degeneration. An army of Geheimrats, Medizinalrats, Sanitätsrats, physicians, assistant surgeons, voluntary physicians and students were fighting against an army of sick people and curing them—for the time being. Highly sensitive people, such as that young medical student Fritz Rainer, were sometimes seized with a horror, a weakness, a defeatism, which is not permitted in a doctor. A doctor must not conceive the idea, with which Fritz Rainer was at present tormenting himself, that surely it would be more humane and more in accordance with God's will to let the sufferers die peacefully than to keep them alive by such violent methods. . . .

Let us take the case of bookseller Kranich, who at that moment was being laid on the operating table. He was certainly prepared to submit to anything, if only he might remain alive. He had tuberculosis of the left shoulder joint, this Kranich, and he was being operated upon for the third time, and this time the arm would have to suffer. Bookseller Kranich, a quiet, good-natured man of excellent taste, did not make much fuss about it. He lay down on the operating table, inhaled the bitter-sweet ether deeply, thought a little of Helene Willfüer, for whom he cherished a secret passion, and then sank thankfully into the deep blue-white trance of anæsthesia.

But the sick working woman who had resorted to desperate unlawful means to rid herself of the burden of motherhood (it would have been the sixth time), and who was lying there worn out, at peace, but weak from loss of blood—*she* would rather die. Summoning all her feeble strength, she had told the sister so, quite distinctly, and it was almost cruel that the assistant surgeon should want to try a blood transfusion.

As to the feelings of the white rat, on which Fritz Rainer, the medical student, had been instructed to carry out a transplantation—nobody cared about that. It was lying there quietly, with a minute chloroform mask on its sharp little nose. Its ruby eyes were open, and the thin little claws were trembling a little. . . .

For Rainer did his task badly; he was clumsy and left-handed. He had a very fine head, but a wretched hand and bad nerves. When he had finished and went down the passage which led past the animal cages, he felt sick and was obliged to retch as though it were his first autopsy. Hörselmann, the anatomy servant, who slipped past wheeling a bier, laughed knowingly to himself. "*He'll* never make a doctor," he thought, full of the wisdom of experience.

Meanwhile, in the mortuary there lay, passive and at rest, twelve corpses, among them two suicides. And in the maternity ward three childbirths were in progress—all at the same time. . . .

Bookseller Kranich was not the only one who, for refuge and consolation, allowed his thoughts to dwell on Helene Willfüer. Fritz Rainer did the same whenever things went wrong, and with him things were often going wrong. He was thin-skinned and sensitive, almost hypersensitive, and he suffered a great deal. His soul was a sensitive instrument which reacted violently to the slightest touch. He had grown rapidly and weedily, and he carried on his somewhat rounded shoulders a replica of the yearning head of the monk in Giorgione's "Concert." Girls thought him handsome and interesting. Helene Willfüer, for whom he had a secret, eager, fierce affection, was curious about him and in her curiosity there was hidden a certain tenderness. She thought him cultured, exceptional and in need of help; herself she thought coarse, matter of fact and homely.

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She was capable, but that was nothing. He was incapable, and that was at least something.

She had had an extraordinary dream, and she had told Gudula Rapp about it :

She was walking through a wood and was looking for the path and could not find it. Then the woodland path turned into a passage, probably the glass-roofed passage which led into the chemical institute downstairs, but it seemed much longer, and from the end of the passage her father came towards her. In her dream she knew that he was dead, but she was not frightened, indeed she was pleased, with a sudden, radiant pleasure such as she had never before experienced. But when the man came nearer, he was not her father but the lecturer. He walked past quite close to her and said something. She could not understand it, but she knew that it was a formula. Then the passage became a woodland path again. The leaves were stirring. She came to a clearing. She recognised the place. It was the marshy meadow behind the Berghof, which was very popular for picnics. She went into the meadow. She could feel its marshiness, the yielding dampness ; and the meadow was not green, but reddish purple. She bent down and saw masses of small orchid-like blooms growing up amid brown-spotted foliage. It was orchis, she thought in her dream, speckled orchis. . . .

She took off her vest—she had nothing else on—and lay down in this meadow of orchis. At first this sent a small shiver down her spine, and then the same, strange, radiant pleasure stole over her again. The orchis grew tall . . . grew tall . . . and finally covered her completely.

That was her dream.

"Very pretty!" said Gudula Rapp, to whom she related it, "but don't let any psycho-analyst hear of it."

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At this Helene blushed, and felt as though she had been found out ; for it seemed that in some obscure and incomprehensible manner this dream was connected with Fritz Rainer. . . .

Helene Willfürer was already waiting in front of the old mews, in which the refectory was situated, when Fritz Rainer arrived at five minutes past one. The sight of her cheered him tremendously. It lifted the burden of the morning from his shoulders. She held out her work-worn hand, into which he laid his thin, slender fingers as though into a cradle. They were still waiting for Meier, the laboratory assistant, who, as a rule, came a little later, and as they walked up and down in the courtyard in a fine, drizzling rain and rid their lungs of the odours of surgery and laboratory, Rainer quickly poured out his heart. His nerves were in a dreadful state, his hands were no good, his experiment was a failure, even Hörselmann had already realised that he would never make a doctor ; it was enough to drive one mad.

"Not drive one mad, Rainer," said Helene, in her deep, soothing voice, "only make one change one's profession, if one really cannot bear it any longer. Are you obliged to become a doctor ? Start something else. You are young——"

"No. I am forced to be a doctor," said Rainer, nodding his head.

He turned his glance towards her. It was full of hunger and longing. Helene did not understand it, yet—that glance. But at that moment Meier arrived, Plain Meier, noisy, tall, broad shouldered, healthy and reassuring. The refectory was very full. At every table people were busy eating, quarrelling, laughing, arguing. Marx was already there and had kept places for them. He was not obliged to feed in the refectory ; he only did so because

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he liked it. But Gudula Rapp, who was to be found there every day, had not yet arrived.

"She's still in the thick of her Buddhas, children. We won't wait for her," said Helene.

Meier ordered the food. He brought along a pile of dishes with the dexterity of a waiter. One could have as many potatoes as one could eat, but only Plain Meier availed himself of this generosity. Helene had only just finished an experiment with chlorine which had completely taken away her appetite.

"My mouth is still full of halogen," she said.

And the surgery had upset Rainer's stomach. They ate quickly. They did not care to linger there, and Gudula would not come now in any case.

No, Gudula Rapp was sitting at home fighting an attack of despair. She was sitting in front of her thesis. She was in her second year now, and she was stuck: she could not go on. Things towered up insurmountably before her. She was as poor as a church mouse. She was studying archæology and was considered to be talented. But now she was at the end of her tether. She was almost prepared to throw it all up, give up the work, the study, the hardships, scrap all the material she had collected, for which she had fought and suffered and made such sacrifices, and take up some other study. She had chosen a subject which was dear to her—Hellenic Motifs in the Buddhist Art of Asia—and had thought that she would complete it quickly and easily. But ever since she had begun to work on it, it had grown under her very eyes, spreading out in all directions, refusing to be kept within reasonable bounds. She had done more than was necessary in her efforts to conquer the Asiatic world, much more. She had studied Hindustani. She had studied Chinese. So far, so good. She had studied Japanese. She had not shirked the dialects of Siam and Korea. She had attached

herself to Dr. Fui-Hong, who lived in the University, and she had been advised by him. Her life had been full of journeys, correspondence, disappointments, and occasional triumphs. Material was scarce in Europe—here and there, widely scattered, were a few plastics from Gandhara which were important—and Asia was out of reach.

In Leyden there were two more very enlightening pieces of this Greco-Indian period of 200 B.C. She had got the idea firmly fixed in her head that it was of the utmost importance for her to see these particular specimens, to handle them, to examine them thoroughly. But what chance was there of travelling to Leyden now? She had no more money, no more time, no more strength. She dropped everything, flung herself on her bed and sobbed, dry, hard, unproductive sobs, which gave her no relief. She put her clenched hands to her mouth and bit her nails. Over her bed, pinned up with four drawing-pins, was a picture of Kwannon, Goddess of Mercy, smiling her peaceful nirvana smile. Ah! Gudula Rapp was also seeking the path, striving towards composure and fulfilment, but she had far to go yet. She took off her big horn-rimmed spectacles, which were misted with tears, and rubbed her large, reddened eyes. Slowly she calmed down, thought things over a little, lit a cigarette and allowed herself the consolation of building a castle in the air. She would go to Leyden. She would find there what she sought. She would find more, she would find the missing link, the bridge between Greece and China, Europe and Asia. Clouds enveloped her. Buddha and Christ floated in a common heaven of culture. Then, as the cigarette burned itself out, and her eyes closed, she became the leader of an expedition. From the sands of the desert she excavated a forgotten city of fantastic architecture full of temples and gigantic images of gods—

and then she slept, a little girl overwrought by the demands of a great enthusiasm.

Five o'clock in the afternoon. At this hour every place in the laboratory was occupied. Experiments were in progress at sixty benches. The air was indescribable, thick, grey, like a spider's web. The ventilators were unable to deal effectively with all the vapours and odours produced by this industrious generation of chemical students. On every side was a boiling, a hissing, a popping, a bubbling—evaporations into fumes of green, blue and red. All the Bunsen burners were alight and numerous water baths, oil baths and solutions were boiling in flat dishes set on high tripods. A fantastic glass vegetation had sprung up on the tables—carboys, flasks, intricate tubing, retorts, pipettes, burettes, test tubes, beakers. Beside each student Gattermann's tome lay open. Gattermann the all-knowing, the faithful adviser, according to whom all experiments are conducted. Gattermann looked like a war-scarred veteran, covered with spots, burns and acid corrosions, his pages well thumbed at the tricky parts and scarcely touched at the theoretical parts. The stone floor of the laboratory which Kränzle, the laboratory servant, had cleaned in the morning, was wet and filthy with a mixture of slippery fluids and sand strewn with fragments of glass. Kränzle was a zealous, good-natured fellow, with a fondness for tips.

At the third bench there was a quarrel. There always was trouble at that bench. The student Strehl took up too much room, got in his colleagues' light and monopolised everything, the water taps, the glasses, the room, the servant. He was perspiring at every pore and muttering under his breath remarks about women students which Helene Willfüer, working opposite him, was intended to overhear. She was bent over her

Erlenmeyer, over the conical flask, and watching with excited eyes whether everything was reacting according to plan. She was coughing and her eyes were watering continuously, because that unpleasant student opposite her was preparing acetylchloride—of all things! Meier, the assistant, who was passing by, came to her rescue.

"No, Herr Kollege," he said, "that won't do. If you must prepare  $\text{CH}_3\text{COCl}$ , then you must go into the Stink Room."

The Stink Room was next door, and was reserved for the more evil-smelling experiments.

The student muttered some ill-tempered retort, turned out his Bunsen burner, upset a tube, and left the "lab." Plain Meier's ears turned blue with anger, but Helene, still coughing, with her eyes still streaming, laughed merrily.

"Never mind, Meier," she said, "that's good enough. I'm satisfied. Now I'll make some tea and we'll make ourselves comfortable."

"Well, everything seems to be in order," grunted Meier, who had cast an eye over her experiment and had brought his stool along with him.

The tea was made, although it was against the rules, and it tasted excellent. They drank it out of beakers on which fluoresceine had left its indelible, greenish-yellow marks. Helene Willfüer possessed the gift of creating her own little circle of comfort even in the midst of the unpleasant and uncleanly atmosphere of the laboratory. She sat on her stool, tilted as it were an invisible glass bell over herself and enjoyed to the full the warmth and aroma of her tea and the relief for her tired feet. She had been standing in the laboratory since midday. Her legs were numb and stiff. Her thighs were tingling with tiredness. Her throat burned, her brain was fogged, and she had pains in the pit of her stomach. All this combined



gave her a clear conscience and a feeling of having done her duty. For Helene Willfüer was so constituted that she summed up all these bodily discomforts entirely to her satisfaction and said :

"Oh, Meier ! I am gloriously tired. I'm going to shut up shop now."

"God bless you ! I must stay on. But would you mind delivering these schedules to the Professor on your way ? He wanted to have them before six o'clock."

"Yes, rather !"

Fräulein Willfüer undertook this errand delightedly. It was quite a treat, a pleasant little reward. She washed her hands without much success, smoothed back her hair with some water, took off her overall in the cloak-room and put on her coat ; gathered up her Gattermann, her felt hat and the schedules, which related to the staining of bacteria, and made her way over to the private laboratory.

Ambrosius was "wound up," as he called it. He was busy doing three things at once. He was dictating an article for the *Journal of the Chemical Society* to a young typist, and at the same time keeping his eye on a retort in which an azo-compound should be formed ; and while he was doing this with his outward attention, his inner mind was occupied with a different train of thought. He was on the track of a big thing, and endless formulæ were forming almost intuitively in his head.

An indescribably dirty overall flapped about him. His neck was bare, and he was pacing like a lion from one end of the laboratory to the other. In the background the first assistant was whirling test tubes on a centrifuge, and a lamp shed a harsh light over the whole scene. Helene took all this in with one glance, as she greeted him and put the schedules down. It impressed itself with extraordinary vividness on her mind as a living picture of creative work. The Professor did not even notice her.

No. He did not notice her.

But in the Villa Ambrosius one no longer waited tea for him. Having practised the violin, sampled various perfumes, played patience and sent off capricious little notes to all parts of the world, one was bored to death and at the same time filled with hunger and unrest. So one collected a few people by telephone, put on a new frock and drove to the Schloss Hotel, where there was dancing to-day. . . .

It had stopped raining and was already getting dark as Helene went out into the street. A sharp, fresh wind sprang up from the hills, and she swallowed the air open-mouthed. She walked with long strides—a straight, upright creature. She had smooth, brown hair, quiet, trustworthy brown eyes, a strong nose and a finely drawn mouth which was too firm, too sensible to be attractive. Her shoulders drooped a little with weariness, but her chin was held high and firm. People jostled one another in the main street, but the Corn Market lay quiet and enchanted in the evening light, and the little crooked passages up the hillside seemed scarcely real in the way they intermingled and clambered over one another with their houses and gables and roofs. She herself lived in an ancient house with sagging beams which staggered crookedly up the castle hill. Downstairs, as a plate informed one, was the Dolls' Hospital, belonging to Eberhard Grasmücke's widow, and behind the window-panes one could see the apparition of the widow herself moving to and fro before a lamp and stuffing sawdust into a doll's body. The narrow stairs wound into darkness. They had been designed by Kubin, so Gudula Rapp maintained, for one might easily have met murderers and ghosts on them. The room, on the other hand, seemed to have been designed by Bruno Taut. It contained only the most essential articles of furniture,

and it had a crooked floor and a crooked ceiling. The meagre iron bedsteads stood poised alarmingly on the slope. The screen, painted by Friedel Mannsfeldt, was the only patch of warmth, colour and luxury in the midst of this parsimony.

It was almost completely dark now, a fact which had escaped the notice of Gudula Rapp, so completely was she absorbed in her shorthand notes. The work-table, with its confusion of books, stood close to the window, and the window was certainly unique, with its outlook over the town, over roofs, towers, river and bridge, as far as the hills in one direction and the silvery plains in the west, which were now beginning to be pricked with tiny lights.

"Good evening, Gulrapp," said Helene, and immediately disappeared behind the screen, where the spirit stove and oil lamp were hidden. "What shall we eat? Porridge? Gulrapp! Stop working! You'll completely ruin what's left of your eyesight."

Gulrapp—"the Gulrapp" as her friends called her, said:

"Kranich is in hospital."

"Kranich? That's impossible! I saw him only yesterday afternoon! He lent me the second part of Spengler."

"Well, I tell you, he's in the surgical clinic and has been operated on. Rainer told me."

"Where is Rainer?" asked Helene quickly.

She came from behind the screen with the lamp, and carried the globe of light carefully before her to the work-table.

"You've worked enough, Gulrapp," she said softly, and laid her hand for a second on her friend's neck.

Gulrapp sighed. It sounded strangely as though she were asleep; but she kept on writing.

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"What's the matter with Kranich?" asked Helene, lowering her voice to a whisper as though not to awaken the Gulrapp.

"Leave me alone," said the Gulrapp nervously, "I must work."

"Well, Gulrapp—how has the work gone?" asked Helene. "You weren't in the refectory?"

"No," said Gulrapp, vaguely, and now she did put her work to one side. "Do you know, Will, sometimes I cannot bear the sight of Marx and that Friedel. There's something so out of date about the whole thing—it's just like an old chromolithograph!"

"Yes, she is rather sentimental. But I like it, I like to see people being fond of one another."

"Well, there's plenty of opportunity for that. There's no shortage of that in our little town. It's in the very bones of a Spring session like this. And you only need to get yourself invited to one of Fräulein Kolding's petting parties to see more love made than even you could want."

"No, I don't mean that. I don't mean that kind, Gul."

"Of course. But what about yourself? Cooking porridge isn't the only thing you can do, I imagine. Surely you've plenty of other feminine accomplishments besides that?" asked Gulrapp bitterly.

"Me!—Gul?"

"Yes, you. You have your pretty moments. Like just now. You should always walk through a dark room with a lamp. That's your rôle."

"My rôle! My rôle is to batter my way through a thick wall with a hard head. And what about you?"

"I don't count at all when it's a question of love or feminine charms."

Helene lay down on her bed and clasped her hands behind her head.

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"Do you never have an intense longing, Gulrapp?" she asked after a time.

"Longing?" said Gulrapp, and looked into the lamplight. It was a cheap lamp with a metal stand of appalling commonness.

"In China," she said, "there is a monastery, and in the monastery forty abbots and monks made of bronze sit silently round a room. I long to see that—to see those forty people. . . . Longing, did you say? Longing for what?"

"Yes, for what?" repeated Helene from her bed.

The Kwannon, Goddess of Mercy, smiled down from the sloping wall opposite. It was very quiet in the room. Over Helene's bed a few interminable formulas had been scribbled on the wall in preparation for the examination, and to impress them more firmly on her mind. She wandered from these into the province of chemistry. Far away in the distance she saw the picture of the Professor as she had last seen him, plunged in work. Perhaps it was for that that one longed—one could long for that, but it was uncertain whether one longed for the man or for the work. . . .

A whistle came from the street. That was Rainer. Helene went to the window—a little to one side a lantern was burning with a dim green light, and there stood Rainer. He was bareheaded. He looked damp, bedewed, excited, queer. His arms were hanging loose by his sides and in his left hand he held a little bunch of flowers, snowdrops, with earth still clinging to their roots. It was remarkable how distinctly Helene Willfüer saw all this. She absorbed it; it impressed itself upon her. It overshadowed in her the picture of the diligent Ambrosius. For a second a strange, sweet, disturbing terror seized her and then it passed away. She opened the window. There was a scent of March and Spring.

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"Where have you come from, Rainer?"

"From the woods. I have brought you some flowers. I was at the back of Gaiberg, that's where they grow. The edges of the woods are quite white. May I bring them up?"

"No—wait a moment. I'll come down."

The Grasmücke moved an inquisitive curtain on the ground floor. She was interested in this young man, who stood for hours in front of the house at night, gazing upwards without Fräulein Willfür taking the slightest notice. The worthy widow had a passion for such things, for she was incurably sentimental.

"You were in Gaiberg?" said Helene severely, downstairs. "But I call that playing truant, Rainer."

"I couldn't help it. Sometimes I have to run away. I can't listen to lectures eleven hours a day. I was running away."

"Running away? From what?"

"Oh, you know. From medicine, from myself, and from something else—which I can't tell you."

"And the flowers are for me? How wonderful they are! Just look at them! Things like these make me wild with joy. And there is still earth clinging to them—how it smells! It is almost as good as a whole forest. I will plant them, Rainer."

"You must come out with me on Sunday, Helene. You can be so marvellously happy—and it is lovely in the country."

"Yes, we'll discuss it with the others."

"No, we won't. The others are always there too. No, you and I—we two alone, Helene."

"We two? Oh, rubbish! You mustn't spoil things, Rainer. And the flowers—we'd better send them to Kranich in hospital. What's the matter with him?"

"I'll go along now and ask. I didn't want to run

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across the Geheimrat to-day. But you must keep my flowers. There—you mustn't hurt me; really you mustn't."

"Oh, oh, oh—if only I could put a little 'go' into you, Rainer, a little spirit! Look—we'll share the flowers. Half of them I'll keep and the other half you must take along to Kranich in hospital and give him my love, and tell him I'll come along as soon as I'm allowed to. And good night. What's the time?"

"It's just striking eight. Good night, Helene, till to-morrow lunch time."

"Yes, to-morrow. But don't go playing truant again, Rainer."

Rainer, student of medicine, went his way with the snowdrops in his beautiful, thin, irresolute left hand. Willfüer, student of chemistry, closed the front door with its rococo scrolls and wound her way up the ghostly stairs. Meanwhile, Rapp, student of philology, had finished off the greater part of the porridge in a sudden access of hunger. And, on the ground floor, Grasmücke's worthy widow let the curtain fall into place.

The chimes rang out from the tower, across the town, across the river and up to the heights of the hills. It was eight o'clock. Kränzle, the laboratory attendant, had at last washed the laboratory clean and put everything in order. The Professor was still working, the centrifuge whirling, steam rising from his experiment. He was in a fever. Perspiration stood out on the backs of his hands. His grey eyes were black with concentration and the blood was racing through the knotted blue veins on his temples. Von Stetten, the biologist, was still sitting over his serum, and the physicist, Bihlmayer, was fearlessly disregarding poisonous vapours, since he must die in any case. The lecture rooms were silent and dark, but in the lodgings, lamps were burning, the leaves of

books rustling and pens racing over paper. In the Town Hall there was a rehearsal for a concert ; in the Church, Gebhardt, Professor of the History of Music, was sitting at the organ, quite alone among the shadows of the pillars, playing something by Buxtehude. The Theosophical Society was holding a meeting, and in the old College House a celebrated guest was speaking on International Law. Marx, student of natural history, had to part from his fiancée and resort to the "Blue Star," where Meier, student of chemistry, was already bestowing robust caresses on a waitress. In the Schloss Hotel there was dancing. Yvonne Pastouri was wearing a silver-grey dress with roses. But in the hospitals the lights were being put out and the night nurses were beginning their duties. The Geheimrat had looked through the day's case notes, and Hörselmann, the anatomy servant, was locking up the dissecting room. The white rat on which Fritz Rainer had performed his transplantation had passed away. And so, too, had the woman on whom the assistant surgeon had attempted a blood transfusion.

Bookseller Kranich, however, was awaking from the anæsthetic and struggling through blue, gleaming veils into consciousness. He felt sick and, being an experienced patient, lay immovable, breathing deeply to overcome the worst. His left arm hurt hellishly, with a biting, burning, drawing agony, right down to the finger-tips.


"Well, how goes it?" asked the night nurse, who came up to the bed carrying a bunch of damp snowdrops.

"May I move my arm?" asked bookseller Kranich with an effort.

The nurse looked at him and was silent.

Bookseller Kranich, without moving himself, turned his glance to his left side. There was nothing there.





There was a large bandage at the shoulder joint—and beyond that, nothing.

“Oh!” said Kranich, and lay quite quiet.

“Here are some flowers with a message from Fräulein Willführ,” said the nurse softly.

Now you are done for, said bookseller Kranich to himself. You will never be able to put your arms round a girl again. You are only half a human being—but you are still alive. You are alive. You are breathing, you can still see flowers. You will drink water, eat fruit, climb the hills, listen to music. You will still see the world, you will still see her; she is still there. It is only a postponement—but you live.

“Yes, yes,” he said, as though in reply, and then closed his eyes and sank into a murmur of great fluttering white wings.





### III

WHENEVER in after years Helene Willfüer tried to remember when "it" had begun with Rainer, she always saw him before her as she had seen him that evening, standing under the street lamp, with upturned face, his left hand loose at his side, holding the snowdrops with the damp earth still clinging to their roots.

That was the beginning. Since then it had lain in her breast like a seed, like something which grew as plants grow, expanding and clinging with delicate tendrils and tenderly seeking the light. At first there was no change in her daily round—Lectures, Laboratory, Refectory, Work, Work and again Work. In the evening occasionally there was a walk, a concert, a theatre, or an evening spent in "digs," drinking home-brewed schnapps over long talks on topics of the moment. Rainer was always present. Rainer was always the cleverest, the most sensitive, the most original, and—so Helene felt—the handsomest. But that was all. Sometimes she thought of him, even while she was working; yes, this did happen, and it did not seem quite right. Sometimes she brushed against his shoulder as she walked beside him; she would leave her hand in his for a moment when they shook hands. Now and then she sang softly to herself—this too was strange. And there seemed to be some change in her sleep; it was not that she slept less, but just that there was a difference in her sleep—and she

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developed soft shadows under her eyes. At times she was so pleasantly and drowsily tired that she would lie on her bed and dream. That was all. . . .

"I don't know what's the matter with you," said the Gulrapp discontentedly. "You're moulting. There is something irritating about you."

"I irritate myself," Helene replied. "It's this damned spring weather. It's such a temptation to slack."

Actually there was no danger of that—none at all. Before her examination in organic chemistry she made a last violent effort, helped by the shrewd advice of Kränzle, the laboratory servant, and the able, practical, support of Plain Meier. She crammed a few last scraps of knowledge into her overladen brain, suffering the whole time from a persistent mild headache, and one morning she wandered into the Chemical Institute for her examination. She felt rather weak about the knees, and her mind appeared to be in a state of complete confusion. She sat next to two other candidates on a plush sofa, stared into the Professor's large questioning eyes, and when it was all over, she found that she had passed with flying colours. A solemn feast was held in the Stink Room for those who had passed, with cakes, home-brewed drinks, and lively speeches. . . .

"I think we ought to look after that young Willfüer a bit," said Ambrosius a few days later to his wife. "She has passed her second examination—she's a good creature. She's the daughter of old Willfüer, who died recently—do you remember? The man who wrote that fine book on the Isenheim Altar. It's a shame that men like that do not get professorships. I believe the girl leads a miserable existence. We might invite her here now and then—that is, if you've no objection."

"Oh, all right, if we must," said the Pastouri. "What

is she like? You know I'm a bit afraid of your women students."

"She's—good lord—she's like a piece of wholesome black bread."

"Fresh black bread sometimes tastes quite good," said the Pastouri. And the Professor replied absently, "Oh, she's fresh enough."

And so Fräulein Willfüer was invited to the next musical evening at the Villa Ambrosius.

This was no small matter for Helene; very far from it. She was a constant source of irritation to the Gulrapp during the next few days, and was worse than ever when she heard that Fritz Rainer had also received an invitation. Fritz Rainer, that quiet, shy, somewhat lifeless young man; that child of sorrow with whom things were always going wrong, who failed so often to meet the demands of study and of everyday life, so Fritz Rainer was also invited to the Ambrosius' house? Helene accepted this fact with a mixture of pride and pleasure, and a puzzling jealousy. How did this come about? What was the explanation?

It was, in fact, quite simple. Fritz Rainer was musical. He was not merely invited in the ordinary way. He played the piano; he was practising a Brahms trio, or a Reger sonata, with Frau Pastouri Ambrosius. Dr. Gebhardt, lecturer in the History of Music, also took part in these rehearsals. He played the violoncello none too badly and endeavoured to convert the Pastouri to serious music. Here was something new. Helene repeatedly asked for information on this subject, and often returned to it in conversation. Rainer seemed more distant and at the same time more precious after this revelation. There appeared to be a different element in which he was as at home as a fish is in water, and about which he could talk in the easy and knowledge-

able tone of complete confidence. Helene observed with amazement that Rainer was able to withdraw himself into music and, as it were, disappear. Music was like a magic cloak, a mysterious enchantment, which made him invisible. She had discovered a sphere in which he was proficient, in which he was of value, in which he, the incompetent, appeared to be perfectly competent.

Yes, that was so, Fritz Rainer acknowledged, and he added that for years he had fought with his family for permission to study music; that, though he had outwardly given way, inwardly he was unchanged; inwardly his repressed love and passion for music burned all the more fiercely. By slow degrees it came to light that Rainer attended the College of Music secretly, that he had scraped together the money to hire a piano for his "digs," a poor instrument but nevertheless a treasure; a precious means of oblivion and flight where "other things" became too unbearable. And with the words "other things" Rainer lifted his musician's hands in an aimless gesture. . . .

There is no need to describe all the adventures into which Fräulein Willfüer plunged in order to do justice to her invitation. She bought herself a pair of artificial silk stockings. She bought herself a pair of patent leather shoes. She bought herself a black tulle scarf.

She was riding for a fall in regard to her finances. She sat up for hours at night and unpicked her best dress, which was, indeed, no longer as good as it had been; she bought ribbon and lace, and with the assistance of Friedel Mannsfeldt she remade the whole thing and ironed it in the excited Grasmücke's back room. She laboured at her hands with potassium cyanide at Meier's instigation, and so got rid of most of the black marks made by silver nitrate, though the hollow between

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thumb and forefinger would not come absolutely clean. And finally she wandered into a hairdresser's and had a few waves put into her smooth brown hair. Afterwards, she thought that her reflection in the mirror showed quite a pretty forehead and that on the whole she did not look too bad.

But enough of all that. One evening she was really and truly sitting on the luxurious low grey plush seat which ran round the walls of the semi-circular room, listening to the Brahms trio, and the Reger sonata; and at the end a few solos played by the Pastouri, light, delicate, little pieces by the old masters. Helene abandoned herself to the music; she was very happy; and her hands were resting relaxed and content in her lap. At her right leant the Professor—she had never had him so near, not since that time in the train. There on the grey plush seat lay his hand with the scar; there was his forehead with the hair receding from his temples; there were the grey, compelling eyes, the bowed strong profile, the massive expanse of shoulder and chest—everything about him expressing power and vitality.

But over there at the piano was Rainer, slight and erect. He was wearing a dark suit, which made him look pale. There was a hollow between the muscles of his neck, which filled her with tenderness. He kept his head bowed, and listened with his hands on the keys, to the music dying away. As he turned round towards the Pastouri his resemblance to the Giorgione monk was so great that it was noticeable to the others. May Kolding pointed at him with her finger and remarked on it expressly; but the Pastouri merely took hold of his dark hair, and turned his head to the piano again, and said, "Little monk, we'll just play the 'Liebesleid' again together—but with feeling."

The delicate little melody arose from the violin and



struck straight at Helene Willfüer's heart. Something happened to her. There were some passages in this piece which filled her with emotion, and it did not make the least difference when later Dr. Gebhardt, lecturer in the History of Music, made some scathing remarks about that type of music. It was really that piece, it was that moment, which made her realise for the first time that she was in love. Yes, she was in love, this young Helene Willfüer; there was a force within lifting her out of herself; there was a yearning, a longing for release and fulfilment. She had never experienced such a feeling before, but nevertheless she recognised it at once, Quite clearly and distinctly—she was in love.

But in love with whom? Ah! that was much more complicated, much more obscure; that depended on the solving of so many immeasurable, indefinable things. A new spark was burning in her, and now it just depended from which side the wind blew. . . .

Helene Willfüer had two conversations that evening, which roused her from her confused and happy dreams and impressed themselves on her mind. The first took place in a corner of the Professor's library, under the light of a round green lamp. Ambrosius was smoking a cigar and from the drawing-room next door drifted detached fragments of conversation.

"Now we two chemists can talk shop for a moment," said Ambrosius; "it's nice to have got hold of you for a bit. How are you getting on with your work for your degree? Have you made up your mind which of the two subjects it is to be?"

"Well, Professor, I shall probably have to stick to the experiments on mono-azidosuccinic acid," she replied, pulling herself together. She was not feeling at all in the mood for chemistry. "I must manage things according to my means. If I pinch and scrape, I shall

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have enough to live on for a year. Could I get that work done in a year? So much of it has already been prepared."

"H'm, yes. In a year—yes, it's possible. But one can never be too sure beforehand. However, it seems quite feasible to me. You are such a sensible person anyway."

"Yes, Professor," said Helene, and looked at him. His hands were lying in front of him on the table beside an old Bible. I am mad, she thought; I am quite mad. I would like you to kiss me. I would like you to take me in your arms, now at this minute, here, and to go on kissing me for ever, so that I grow weak with happiness.

"And afterwards? What do you propose to do afterwards?" asked Ambrosius, knocking the ash off his cigar.

Afterwards? After what? What were they talking about? Helene, whose thoughts had drifted away again, pulled herself together. They were talking about her degree and of nothing else. We are talking of chemistry, Fräulein Willfür, only of chemistry.

"Afterwards, I hope to get a job, Professor."

"A job—h'm, that's rather a business. If I can help you at all—well, you know that. As a rule I am all against women studying, but you are really capable. By the way, may I congratulate you—you look so charming to-day, it is a pleasure to look at you. I have never been able to imagine you in anything but a dirty overall. It's a shame."

Yes, it is a shame, prayed Helene to herself. Help me out of my confusion. You are so strong.

She sat still and kept a tight hold on herself. Perhaps it was all due to the sweet, cool pineapple cup that she had been drinking. Within everything was relaxed and dissolved, but outwardly she controlled herself.

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She sat there, a young lady, with her hands clasped, her mouth composed and steady, her legs modestly and innocently together. The Professor looked at her, put his cigar away, smiled and was silent. It was quiet.

Single sentences emerged from the general hubbub in the drawing-room: "It's the formality in Brahms, believe me, sir, only the formality." "In the Easter holidays? I have been thinking of the Riviera. If my husband hasn't time, then I shall go alone." "Herr Rainer is a man of superlatives." "No, Fräulein Kolding, there are moments at which I could weep, even though I knew a hundred times, that it was only a Neapolitan sixth." "I would very much like to attend a post-mortem, I think it must be extremely interesting." "That young man, you mean? Yes, he has an uncommon head; I don't know his name. He seems to be an artist." "Are you going to take part in the tennis tournament, Dr. Kolding? Then you must be our guest." "He made a lot of money out of those dye-stuffs, I can assure you, Herr Geheimrat." "Too *décolleté* for a semi-evening dress." "I mean the *unknown* Balzac." "Madame Yvonne has the most beautiful arms that I have ever seen in a woman."

Helene noticed that something strange had entered the Professor's expression, something glowing and consuming, like an animal at night, and she was startled. His glance was no longer on her, it stared strangely into space; no, not into space, it had direction, it had a goal. Over there hung a mirror and in the mirror there was a picture—a vivid yet unreal picture. Yvonne Pastouri stood there in the mirror—she was delicately portrayed, just a soft little cloud of lilac in a silver frame. Smilingly and with closed eyelids she was bending her head backwards, and holding outstretched her naked arm. It was not possible to see her hand in the

mirror. One could only see the smooth black hair of Dr. Kolding bent low over the white arm.


In front of Helene Willfüer, on the table beneath the green lamp, lay the Professor's hands, the hands that were so familiar to her. Those hands were trembling. They clenched. They moved from the table-top and were thrust into the pockets of the dinner jacket. The Professor drew in his breath through his teeth.

"We will go back into the drawing-room, Fräulein Willfüer," he said huskily. Something big was shattered inside Helene Willfüer. . . .

That was one conversation, which led dangerously to a concealed precipice, even though it was quite a sensible conversation and came to nothing. The other occurred much later on, on the way home, high up above the town.

It was a night impossible to describe, with a sky full of enormous stars which seemed to hang low down and to shine again in the darkness of the stream below. There was no moon, but behind the hills there was a soft brightness which shed a silvery haze over their gentle outline. From the woods arose the sound of two voices singing, and then all was still. The silence was so profound that the dew could be heard dripping from the rocks at the side of the path. The air was heavy with the mysterious scent of green chestnut blossoms from the trees on the slope. Helene and Rainer walked along side by side; they walked more and more slowly; and in the end they stood still and gazed silently down, leaning against the damp wood of a garden fence. When Helene's hand touched Rainer's he began to tremble.

"What's the matter with you?" she asked softly, although she knew. He looked at her and was silent, and he trembled more violently. She could feel it, and it made her heart beat.



"Don't you understand me even now, Helene?" he whispered chokingly.

"Yes—I know now—the music is still in me," she answered with no apparent connection between the words.

"Music is a marvellous home—for those who have no home in life," he said quietly. It sounded very serious, and Helene was touched. She turned her head slowly towards him, she was as tall as he, her breath met his, her mouth was quite close to his. With a little sob he sank against her, and clasped her shoulders with his shaking hands.

Was it this for which she had longed? Did it arise thus from the depths of dreams and merge with the night and so come into being—a great, vast, deep-rooted, inner relief? A small cloud drifted over the valley, and in a distant garden a bird began to sing, all alone in the midst of the night.

"How young we are," whispered Helene Willfürer, smiling with wet eyes; "how young we are—and how little we know. . . ."





WHEN Ambrosius had accompanied his last guests to the garden gate, and Dr. Kolding's car had driven off and disappeared down the winding street, he stood still for a few minutes and looked down over the town. The young foliage threw delicate moving shadows, like Japanese drawings on the asphalt; an animal rustled invisible in the bushes. Ambrosius, too, heard the lonely bird singing somewhere in the night. I cannot bear it any longer, he thought, as he went back into the house. There must be an end to it.

Yvonne was standing at the piano as he entered and, lost in thought, was strumming the same fifth over and over again. Ambrosius came up behind her. He was much taller than she, much older than she. He came so close to her, that the breast of his dinner jacket, as it rose and fell with his heavy restrained breathing, almost touched her slim, very white back.

"Pleased with the evening, my pet?" he asked, as she took no notice of him.

"It was all right. I have at least got some violin playing off my chest," she replied without raising her eyelids, which were lightly touched with lilac make-up. She put her hand to her hair, which was so fair that it was almost white, and as she lifted her arm, Ambrosius clenched his teeth.

"You are—dangerously beautiful this evening," he said. "Have you made many conquests?"



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"Oh, do leave that alone, it is so boring."

Ambrosius went away from her into the next room and came back with a cigar which gave him a feeling of confidence.

"That fellow Kolding is very pleasant, isn't he, my pet?"

"Very pleasant. Very."

"You like him?"

"Like? Oh, no. Not particularly. I am a little intrigued by him—that is all."

"Intrigued? You have an insatiable appetite for people, Yvonne, do you know that?" said Ambrosius. His face was threatening as he stood close behind her, but when she turned round to him, he began to smile awkwardly and propitiatingly.

"That is your fault, you men. You all become threadbare so quickly," answered the Pastouri.

"All of us? Oh! And does this Kolding fellow promise to be of sterner stuff? What special merits has he to thank for your interest? I don't wish to say anything against him, far from it. He is a man of the world, and cuts a very good figure. And you believe that there is even more in him than that?"

"Well, I will tell you one thing; he is cold. That attracts me very much in a man. For the moment I have had enough of—the other—you know that."

"You are a firebrand, Yvonne. You enjoy setting a fire alight. You put a match to it, and then, when it does burn, you don't like it."

"Is it burning?" asked the Pastouri, and stopped strumming her chord.

"Yes, it is burning," said Ambrosius softly, without smiling, and stretched out his hands. He stretched his hands out, but he did not touch her. She noticed this with a mocking little smile. She shrugged her shoulders,

picked up her white Chinese shawl from the grey plush seat and wrapped herself up to her chin in it.

"Shall I take pity on you, or shall I laugh at you? You are an insatiable glutton yourself, a wicked cannibal—the way you always want to cut up and swallow your poor young violinist. But understand this, I won't have it any more. I won't have it. You must leave me in peace. You only make me angry and horrid to you."

"Yvonne," said Ambrosius, looking at her beseechingly, "Yvonne—I beg you! Can't you care for me any more? You are my wife!"

"Yes, yes, yes," she cried and turned quickly towards him. "I am your wife, and I do care for you. I like you in a hundred different ways, but just that one particular way—is missing. I can't help it."

"But you married me! My darling! You gave yourself to me, you belong to me."

"Oh, I know, I know, I married you. I was in love with you. I was proud of you. You pleased me. It was marvellous to conquer and tame you—I, little Yvonne Pastouri, to tame the great, famous Professor Ambrosius. But did I know you then? Can two people know each other before their first night together? Oh! Let's drop all that; what is the good of talking about it? I am tired. I want to go to bed. You go to bed, too, darling. I do care for you, believe that, and be content."

"Content! Content! But that's just hell. Don't you realise that? That isn't marriage, that's just purgatory, torment. My dear, how can you be so blind? Here am I—crazy about you, hopelessly in love, mad with passion. Can you feel none of that? How can you be so cold, so grudging, so unfeeling? Don't lock yourself away from me, let me come to you, and everything will be different."

"I cannot do that. I may not do that," said Yvonne

softly ; and now her pretty little face became hard and serious. "It would ruin me. I should be broken. Something in me would be injured. I may not do anything contrary to my emotions."

"But what have I done to you? Is it irreparable, Yvonne?"

"That I don't know. I don't know whether it is irreparable. Perhaps some day I may get tired—and give in. But that will be a bad moment for both of us."

The Professor went to the window and leant his forehead against it. The coldness of the glass was a relief. "Whatever have I done to you?" he complained, uncomprehending and completely mystified.

Yvonne began to strike the same fifth again on the piano.

"You haven't done anything to me, and I haven't done anything to you. We simply do not suit one another. The human body has its own laws and no will power can overcome them. I did not know that, before—now I know it."

"Darling, I want to ask you something, quite calmly," said Ambrosius. He could only see the outline of her delicate form mirrored in the window, and he remained turned away from her. "Tell me the truth. Is there—someone else?"

"No."

"The truth, Yvonne."

"No. Not yet. I never lie. I shall never lie to you. So far there is no one else."

Ambrosius plunged his two hands into the hair on his temples and clutched it fast. It was a gesture to which he had accustomed himself when at work, when things were difficult and when he was confronted with insoluble problems. "But I love you. I want you," he whispered.

There was no answer. Yvonne had left the room.

Again the Professor leant his forehead against the cold window. Then he moved away and walked up and down the room, and at last he began to whistle. He whistled a commonplace little melody, which his brain had recorded without his realising the fact. It was called "Liebesleid." He went to the piano and struck the same chord as had been sounded there only a moment before, and allowed the sound to die slowly away. Then he slammed down the lid—there was a certain satisfaction in this abrupt movement—lit another cigar and sought consolation in his library. After some deliberation he selected a book—it was Kant's *Prolegomena*—and tried to read it.

The experiment was unsuccessful. The sentences passed through his mind, empty of meaning; they seemed lifeless, inhuman, and offered no help. Oh, he was a beaten man, this Professor Ambrosius, this indefatigable research worker, this world-renowned scholar. His spirit had forsaken him and his body ruled ignominiously. Feminine limbs danced across the pages of his book, a stream of alluring figures floated round the walls; uplifted arms, outstretched legs, throats thrown back in enticement, submission. The man groaned. His feelings shook him. He was like a large tree shaken to its roots by a storm. He pressed his fists against his eyes. Yvonne was there, there inside his eyelids. Yvonne was throbbing in his blood; she was dancing in his brain. Oh, it was going badly with him. He was nearly finished. He could bear it no longer. It had overpowered him. It had undermined him. It harmed his work, even his work. It pursued him everywhere, in the lecture room, in the laboratory. He was becoming demoralised. He did not lecture so well. He was forced to make pauses during which he was submerged by his thoughts. It broke up the construction of his formulas. In every retort he saw only one thing forming out of the

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vapours—the small, white, soft, feminine body which was denied to him.

He threw away the book that was of no help to him, flung open the windows, and drew in long deep breaths of the night air. Oh, those great stars up above; that bird's song, so penetrating and amorous through the darkness of the night; those blossoming chestnuts on the slopes of the hill, whose scent suggested the unutterable secrets of love! He slammed the windows, as though to escape, and extinguished the lights.

He took refuge in the ascetic air of his own room. There stood bed, table and wardrobe sparsely arranged against the walls. The middle of the room was left empty to allow him to walk to and fro while thinking over his work. On the table lay two charts, a few pages of manuscript, notes for the next day's lecture. Vacantly he read them through, and became calmer as he did so. He drained a glass of water in great gulps. Everything that Ambrosius did had in it something impetuous and forceful. He undressed himself. The cool air caressed his powerful body, and for a few minutes he stood there, a giant and yet like a tormented boy.

He was forty and such a crisis at that age was affecting him profoundly. He looked down at himself. He appeared strange to himself, changed for the worse, become too massive, too heavy, too weighty. He went up to the tiny little mirror, which he had hanging there, and full of a wondering curiosity looked into it. What was it about him that made her avoid him, withhold herself, and so turn him into a sorry caricature of a man? Yes, that's me—that's me right enough—he thought. He thought confusedly and his sight was somewhat blurred. He saw the head with its high forehead, on which the dark hair encroached; the deep-set eyes surrounded with little wrinkles; the thinker's temples,

shadowed, covered with veins; the nose strong and straight; the chin still firm, but nevertheless already ageing, showing distinctly the havoc wrought by these months; and the mouth poor, almost childish, tortured, tormented, betraying everything. Ambrosius clenched his fists and thumped on his chest with them. What do you want, you poor creature? he thought. What is going to happen to you? Whither is all this leading you. . . ?

The town was resting. It laid itself down in the valley, stretched itself up the slopes and breathed contentedly. The summer session had not yet commenced. The lecture rooms were empty and silent. From time to time the old brown wood of the benches creaked—it sounded as though in sleep. It was actually possible to repaint a few walls in the corridors of the Institute. There was a smell of turpentine and varnish. Charwomen appeared and did their work. For a time no thinking was done. Near the station two flags had been planted. There were to be celebrations, a lawyers' assembly; a Bach festival full of abstract, weighty polyphony; a congress of palæontologists—small matters for the brains of this town, so used to problems, matters that received attention merely as side lines, during the holidays.

Many students went home, but an equal number remained behind—studious, ambitious, impatiently intent upon their goals. A few industrious chemical students, headed by Plain Meier, had managed to make arrangements to work in the laboratory during the holidays. Among them was Fräulein Willfür. Nor had the medical student, Rainer, though in other respects

no champion of study, gone home for the holidays. His reason was that he was absolutely and completely enslaved by Helene Willfüer. He was bound to her by a sweet torment. He positively could not exist without her. "A symbiosis," said little Marx, using an expression from his own special sphere—an expression signifying the association of organic bodies for mutual support and benefit. But he, too—the little student Marx—spent his holidays near his fiancée and only occasionally travelled to the neighbouring capital to visit his parents. He came of a wealthy family and had two adoring small sisters, with whom he would play childish games most devotedly. He had a kindly disposed, companionable father and a dainty, exquisite little mother. All was well with him to an unusually satisfactory degree. Sometimes the Gulrapp looked at him in wonder and thought, "Good heavens! You little know how lucky you are! Whereas I . . . !" and there she would stop and think of her work for her degree, that mountain of mental torment; of her poverty; of her family sitting at home surrounded by a crowd of children and writing complaining letters to her. And then ambition would burn in a cursed and damnable way in her veins. One day she packed up a small canvas suitcase.

"I have made up my mind," she said. "I am going to Leyden after all. It's got to be. Even if I have to starve for the next six months."

Poor thing! There were two pairs of lovers sitting in the room—Marx and Friedel on the edge of one bed, Rainer and Helene on the other. The Gulrapp was so out of things—so superfluous. Latterly her hands had begun to shake and tremble nervously on the slightest provocation. She was now studying Sanskrit, poor, talented, zealous, unattached Gulrapp. . . .

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In their good-natured, friendly way they arranged a little farewell party. Helene produced some Vanille liqueur, Marx brought some kind of cup to drink—the slopes around the town were full of shady patches of woodruff, which makes such delicious flavouring for cup—and bookseller Kranich looked after the supply of cold meats and sweets.

For bookseller Kranich was back again, as quiet, as nice and as anxious to help as ever. He had a fine new left arm, a very handsome artificial limb of first-class workmanship. He wore a glove on the wooden hand, and there was a joint at the elbow which promised a certain flexibility with practice. At the moment he could not do much with it, and on some days Kranich relieved himself of his spare part altogether—for the wound on his shoulder still pained him excessively. But no one made any comment—that was his own private concern: it was sufficient that he lived, that he still existed. Fräulein Willfürer took care of him at meals and helped him into his coat. He looked at her with eyes that had the knowing and penetrating expression which comes from the mastery of pain.

They all sat round and thoroughly enjoyed themselves. The windows were open and music drifted in from the castle garden. Down below on the river, a white sail floated by, and as darkness fell, the scent of the woods drifted in from the hills. It was one of those evenings of an intense, consuming, lingering sweetness, such as only young people experience and such as make young people laugh and weep. Friedel Mannsfeldt was standing at the wistaria-embowered window, listening with tears in her eyes to the sounds outside. She bent over the pots of flowers, thick with buds, which were growing there.

“Helene has the hands for flowers,” she said, in her small, clear voice, and smiled into the room.

Marx, who was a little drunk, gazed at her hungrily.

"Hands for flowers—rot!" said Helene prosaically, looking at her fingers, which were going through another period of nitric acid staining.

Rainer was sitting on the floor, with his lute in his hands, singing softly to himself.

"Sister mine, sister mine," he sang, "When go we home?"

It was a dreamy tune, which died away sadly. Meier had produced some Chinese lanterns which hung, red and green, from the ceiling, their light flickering over the brows, the eyelashes and the cheeks of the girls.

"Yes, you have got the hands for flowers," said Friedel. "There's nothing funny about it—there are some people who can make everything flourish—children, animals and flowers; and with others everything dies. Anything would be quite safe with you."

"Rainer is positively covered with buds now that Helene has begun to devote herself to him," said Gulrapp mockingly.

Helene, who had laid her hands on Rainer's head for a few moments, sensed acutely the warmth and marvellous fineness of his hair; she could feel the bones defining his small head, and at that moment she loved him dearly. But she stood up. She felt a little ashamed of herself.

"Well, I'm going down to make a new bandage for the Grasmücke," she said. For the Grasmücke had fallen down the ghostly stairs and was lying below with a swollen leg, surrounded by sick dolls awaiting clinical attention. Some cup was sent down to her with good wishes. When Helene came back, bookseller Kranich was standing by the wash-basin, in which the cup was cooling, and it appeared that he was about to make a speech.

"It is quite inexcusable," were roughly his words. "I

know that it is quite inexcusable to talk about oneself. But I have an urgent desire to do so. It seems to me as though I had been on a journey—and I want to tell my friends of the things I learnt on that journey. I learnt—I will be brief—I learnt how marvellous it is, how indescribably marvellous it is, to be alive. I spent a little while lingering on the threshold, where it is cool and indefinite and where the great gateway stands—yes, I have always regarded it as a great gateway, a gateway in a wall on whose other side all is quiet and cypresses grow. Forgive me if this sounds high-flown. I am a simple soul, I scarcely dare let myself use grand phrases—but that is how I have felt since I returned from over there. The solemnity of life impresses me so much sometimes that I must talk about it. You are very young, all of you; and probably you all just take the fact of being alive for granted. I beg you, I beg you to *realise* that you are alive. To feel that it is a festival; a festival—I use this word even though I am not fond of big words. Don't just accept the fact that you are alive—no, *feel* it, *sense* it with all your strength; and say 'Hurrah' for this wonderful, this indescribably wonderful Life, as I do, in raising this glass——"

Dear, dear! What on earth had possessed this quiet bookseller Kranich? He stood there with his glass of wine, and, as he spoke of Life, his cheeks flushed and his wooden hand rattled clumsily against the edge of the table. He was much affected, and the others were not unmoved. They clinked glasses with him, partly from good nature and partly from admiration, and they all cried "hurrah," three times, "hurrah" for Life. After all, it was springtime, and Meier, the oldest of them, had only just turned three and twenty. . . . Helene Willfüer shouted her "hurrah" particularly loudly. It was a little fanfare for Life. And afterwards, in an access of sudden,

heartfelt excitement, she kissed Kranich on his hot cheeks—at which the others applauded.

Suddenly Rainer began to speak, down there on the slanting floor, and he accompanied his words with a few inconsequent chords plucked softly with his left hand from the strings of his lute.

“No,” he said, “I do not believe it. I do not believe that it is a festival to be alive. I cannot make myself believe it. It is not by my own wish that I live—no, certainly not. We are forcibly planted down in life, as in a cage, a prison, a narrow, dark pit, through which we must wend our way. We exist—and we have to accept this fact in a world of limited physical existence. It has always seemed like a pit to me. Even when I was a child I saw it like that. Once I went through a tunnel—I may have been five years old—it was dark, rumbling and full of thick smoke, and I suffered from an unspeakable fear and horror. It was interminable. I felt sick, almost faint. But quite suddenly the tunnel came to an end, and it was all over. The fear and horror had been endured, and were behind me. The sun was shining and a flock of little sheep was being turned into a meadow to graze. That is what Life is like. We have to go through it, and quite suddenly we have passed it. But a festival—oh, no! And how anyone who has won through to the great gateway, beyond which all is peace, Kranich—and can then turn back, I fail to understand. But there will always be people for Life and against Life. To some it is sacred to their innermost souls, and to others it is death. I am one of those others—I do not say so, because I am unhappy; it is not so simple as that, for I *am* happy. I am happy,” he said, reaching behind him to Helene, “but for all my happiness I say ‘no’ to life. It is only a transition, a mistake—the real thing comes afterwards. That is my view—and it is hardly one that we can toast.”

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*Twang!* The lute added a small discord to the unsolved finale of the speech. Meier, who was completely at sea in matters of metaphysics, said "Cheerio!" and drained his glass of cup which was slowly getting warm. By now the scent of woodruff filled the whole room with its vague, delicate sharpness. The Gulrapp unexpectedly added an epilogue.

"It is not in the 'yes' or 'no' that it lies, but rather where they both meet and blend with one another—where there is no 'yes' and no 'no,' but an eternal calm. In Nirvana, Kranich and Rainer can meet and understand one another. There antithesis ceases, and all is one," she said, and she gazed from behind her horn-rimmed spectacles at the picture on the crooked wall of the Kwannon, Goddess of Mercy, who seemed to smile on her as on a little sister.

Marx, who was quietly and blissfully drunk, lay with his head in Friedel's lap, singing a favourite song of Angelus Silesius.

But Helene glanced behind the screen, where the alarm clock stood, and said sensibly: "It is time for the Gulrapp to go. We must take her to the station."

Meier took the small suit-case. Kranich carried coat, umbrella and portfolio and behaved as though he had two arms. The lanterns were taken along as well to give an added air of festivity. The worthy widow, who was confined by her injured leg to her green repp sofa, heard the little torchlight procession clump down the stairs and saw the cheerful gleam pass her windows. When all was quiet and nobody else could be expected, the Grasmücke made herself ready for bed. She relieved herself of her teeth and her hair—she had two wigs, a nondescript one for every day and a slightly fairer one for Sundays; she put on a bed jacket with stiff, goffered pleats in the collar, and when she was in bed, she looked exactly like

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one of the weather-beaten, bald and toothless dolls awaiting her attention. She could just hear in the distance the final march with which the concert in the castle grounds came to an end, and then she put out the light.

Grasmücke's worthy widow had no life of her own. She had to rely on the experiences of her lodgers, and she took a passionate interest in them. Students of all kinds had passed through the slanting, crooked rooms: men and women, lazy and diligent, drunk and sober, students of all grades and in all subjects. Some had gone far, some had gone under. But all of them, all of them, had been followed by the Grasmücke with the same eager interest. She had placed expectations and hopes on them all, with a kind of gambler's fever. And when a romance was brewing, the widow enjoyed days and nights full of excitement. She knew the clang of the old lock on the gate, the shutting of the rococo door, the creaking of the stairs, the footsteps going up behind her walls and wandering through the crooked room above her ceiling. She lay and listened.

She heard her young lady come back rather late and walk up and down outside the house a few times with the young man. Then the door was unlocked. Then they both stood together in the hall. At first she could hear them through the wall talking. The young lady laughed. Later on she spoke for a long time and evenly in her deep voice, and then there was only whispering. After that there was nothing to be heard. The widow held her breath—for now without doubt they were kissing—and then the young lady said in a loud voice, "Well, good night—see you to-morrow." The gate clanged, the door was locked. The young lady went upstairs. The young gentleman stood for a short time in front of the house. He threw a shadow on the curtains

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of the widow's room. Then his step died away down the alley. A very respectable young lady, thought the widow.

But in this acknowledgment there was a trace of disappointment, as though an interesting novel had ended tamely. . . .

The next day entered the crooked alleys with music and red flags, for it was the first of May. An entirely unseasonable, summery heat was wafted into the valley on a southerly breeze, and all the young people appeared in front of the Grasmücke's house. They whistled and shouted and announced that it was glorious weather for bathing. Helene Willfürer, beaming and excited, allowed herself a holiday. She watered her flowers, put on a copper-coloured linen frock over her black bathing suit, made the worthy widow a fresh bandage, and then ran out of the house straight into Rainer's outstretched arms, which were waiting to receive her.

They rowed up the river in two boats. Meier rowed with Marx, and Kranich sat on the seat behind Helene. The river slid towards them in gentle pale green ripples, and the river banks, with their hills, streets, white houses and people, drifted slowly by into the valley. A hawk hung high and still in the air. Helene saw it as she bent her head back and tried to look into the hot young sun. Kranich sat contentedly behind her, his eyes fixed thoughtfully on the delicate line where her hair joined her neck. To-day he had left his arm at home and his bandaged wound was painfully conspicuous in the summer heat, as though it were thirsting for the cool green freshness of the water. Rainer was rowing not without difficulty against the stream. After a time he took off his shirt and sat with his narrow chest exposed to the sunlight. Meier, in the second boat, had already removed everything except his bathing drawers. He was glistening with perspiration and singing a song in gruff

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tones. Friedel was wearing a dress of the same copper-red as Helene's. They had made the dresses together and had embroidered borders after Friedel's design and they looked like day and night—like two sisters, one fair and dainty, the other dark and sturdy.

They were all young and in the bloom of life. In Helene Willfüer particularly there sparkled a zest, a happiness that almost hurt. It seemed to her as though she could not meet the demands made by Life, as though she must expand, must feel more intensely, must experience a still deeper enjoyment. Her eyes danced—nothing escaped them. She saw the hawk above and felt his swaying poise and watchfulness, and also she felt the showering fall of drops that fell from the oars, the cheerful noise as they cut the water, the gentle green flow of the ripples, the damp scent of the water's surface, and a brimstone butterfly dancing over his reflection, drunk with the sun and the southern breeze. She felt all this so deeply that she had to press her hands tightly together; and over and above it all she felt a secret, warm and tender pleasure in Rainer's pale brown skin with its youthful muscles playing beneath it. All of this combined made her suddenly cry, "Children! I don't believe we have the slightest idea how lucky we are. Really, we ought to shout. We ought—oh! I don't know what we ought to do. We ought to be able to fly into a thousand pieces and feel separately in each single piece—that's how I feel."

Rainer looked at her with a smile. You strong creature! he thought. He, too, was happy. He settled down more to his oars as though he must show his own strength. Friedel Mannsfeldt in the second boat demanded a waterfall, a high, gigantic waterfall in three cascades with a rainbow above made of colours that never were. Marx promised to procure both waterfall and rain-

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bow for her—later—after the wedding. Meier just rowed and perspired. He was devoid of passing fancies. Kranich let his right hand trail in the water and was silent. His wound was burning.

At noon they tied up and handed over their boats to the care of a barefooted old man who was lying on the bank with a white Pomeranian beside him, just beneath the terrace of an old inn. Fishing nets were drying on the slopes of the meadows and a skiff lay keel uppermost in the sun, smelling strongly of tar. Helene, who loved this smell, sniffed it eagerly. Some fat geese went waddling by with some goslings, and a young frog sat under a marsh-marigold leaf, looking like a financial magnate and learning to catch midges. Helene tried to enter into conversation with him—she liked to be on good terms with every kind of creature—but the frog broke off the conversation and hopped into the water.

“He is in love. You can tell that in frogs by the swollen thenar muscle,” said Marx technically.

“How simple it is for such creatures,” Rainer replied, in such a heartfelt manner that they all began to laugh. Helene drew his arm into hers and followed the others at a distance.

“You poor little frog,” she said, half-mocking, half-gentle. “Poor lovelorn Firlei——”

Firlei she called him. It was a child’s name. He was little Firlei, nearly five months younger than she was. At times she felt like a large, old, white-haired mother beside this small, immature, boyish creature. . . .

Here, too, a few red flags hung listlessly in the mid-day heat. Above, where the fields began, they knew of a small inn where, in an harbour, they could eat excellent and cheap omelettes. Friedel Mannsfeldt romanced a little about asparagus—and Helene immediately unearthed another animal, a kitten, which she took up into



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her lap with little cries of pleasure. Rainer sat beside her and watched with a rapt smile how the shadows of the leaves and the little patches of light flitted over his copper-clad maiden. Kranich, in the corner of the arbour, was fully occupied with trying to eat his meal as decently as possible with his one hand. They all looked the other way, for this was a little private tragedy. Afterwards they broke up.

The path led up the hill through fields lying in the hot, broiling sun, past fruit-trees scattering their last blossoms, along the banks humming with life, up to the edge of the wood, which shimmered with anemones. It happened quite naturally that, once in the wood, their paths separated. At first there was a glimpse of a dress, a call through the green twilight, and then all was quiet, save for the tops of the trees swaying gently in the warm air high above, and sometimes rustling with a sound like the note of a violin.

"Oh! The sun has made me gloriously tired," said Helene and stood still. "Look, let's lie down here together and go to sleep."

Rainer looked at her with a strange expression. How innocent she was, this large, strong, independent Helene Willfür—and how he loved her! When she saw his eyes she was a little frightened and said softly:

"But you must be good and gentle—promise, Firlei?"

What else could poor Firlei do? He simulated restfulness and composure. He stretched himself in the grass beside Helene, leaving a bush of flowering anemones between them. They looked as though they were blushing, those anemones with their glowing flower faces. Helene stretched out her arm towards him. A soft down grew on it, and the skin was burned from the sunny journey up the river.

“Please cool it,” she said. Firilei pressed her arm into the damp, mossy ground and moved closer to her.

“Please, this wants cooling, too,” he whispered.

She looked at his mouth with a wondering earnestness. Then she took his head between her hands and pulled him towards her. A gentle peace flowed through him with her kiss. Quietly he lay down in her arms and breathed deeply and evenly.

“How blue it is,” Helene whispered later on. She had been gazing up with wide-open eyes at the wheeling summer sky, which seemed to rest on the tree-tops.

Firilei, lying with his lips against her beating heart, whispered :

“When will it redden ? ”

But he got no answer.

He slept, and when he woke up the afternoon was passing and the sun shining aslant through the sparse young foliage. Helene was sitting up and looking fixedly in one direction with an attentive smile.

“What is it, darling ? ”

“Ssh ! Look at that beetle. I’ve been watching him for a long time,” she whispered, with her finger on her lips. Rainer sat up, brushed the grass and moss from his shirt and watched.

She was right. There was the beetle, a fat, robust, male beetle of a silvery blue metallic colour, and between his hind legs he was dragging his little ball of dirt, with which he manœuvred, now this way, now that.

“He is a hero,” whispered Helene, amusedly. “He has had the most unimaginable adventures with his ball. He has lost it, he has fallen down precipices, he has had to climb over a mountain, he has had to ford a river of rainwater—but he has never left his ball behind. That is his treasure. He simply must get home with it. He is an incredibly obstinate fellow, that scarab.”

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"A treasure? A fine treasure to slave over! No more than a little piece of dirt!" said Rainer. "It is a pleasure to meet you, my dear colleague. Are you also studying medicine? One has to slave away most disgracefully, doesn't one? And in the end one brings home a small pill made of dirt. We have a great deal in common, my dear colleague."

"You? You're not in the least alike! You're no pill-monger; but I, perhaps I am a dung-beetle, in my dirty laboratory—and I get there with my balls of dirt, you know, by sheer obstinacy. But you!"

"Well, what am I, if I haven't even as much character as a dung-beetle?"

"You? Just a Firilei! Or a cricket who sits in his hollow and makes music, and chirps his heart away when he really ought to be getting down to his exam."

"Helene! It's unkind of you to start off on that to-day, just when we are alone like this in the woods, and when I am so happy, so drunk with happiness—happier than I have ever been before. Yes, do you hear, never, never before have I been so happy and felt so strong as I do now, with you helping me. I shall take my exam this session. I have promised to, and I shall keep my word. I have written to my father, Helene, and told him everything, and told him that medicine and I do not hit it off. I will take the exam, that much I will do, so that he may see that I am willing—but after that I shall change my profession. I must devote myself to music—nothing can stop me. There I may yet become somebody. Like this I shall perish."

"One does not perish so easily as all that, Rainer."

"Yes, oh! yes! One does perish. I can't explain it to you exactly. Listen—I am neither a giant nor a hero—even when I was a boy I was never in mischief, I was always a dreamer. Watch people on Sundays, when the

excursion trains are full to overflowing. There are always some who shove and push and get decent seats and laugh at the others. And the others stand on the platform and the train goes off and leaves them. That is how it is with me. But the question is which are the better people: those who get themselves seats or those who stand aside? It is not necessarily always weakness, I assure you, but it is a sort of pride, or modesty——”

“I know, Firilei,” she said, and looked soothingly at his excited face.

“No, let me go on. I want to tell you something more. I am now doing gynæcology. Not long ago I examined a pregnant woman, a girl, who was expecting an illegitimate child, and so receiving free attention—a House case, as we call it there. There were four and twenty of us and we examined the girl one after another. She was lying on the table and she kept her eyes tight shut. When it was all over, she looked at us one after the other, as though she were almost demented. I can’t stand anything like that. It touched me too deeply—I simply am no doctor. At the confinement there were only twelve present, because it happened during the holidays. Just imagine a girl, such a poor little creature, scarcely twenty, giving birth to her child with twelve youths looking on. No—listen to me. They brought a woman into the lecture room. She looked like a drowned corpse. You cannot imagine the horror of it—puffed up, inhuman, blue, her eyes set deep in her face, her hands like balloons. She could not lie down. She could not breathe. They could not make her lie down. They brought her up in a chair. The Geheimrat lectured on, drew attention to this and that, gave his diagnosis; uncompensated stenosis of the aorta. A few days later she lay in the dissecting room; the diagnosis had been wrong. The woman had a carcinoma which had blocked the œsophagus—they showed

us the specimen. There you have medical knowledge ! No, I am not a cynic. I just can't stand in the Anatomy Room beside a dissected suicide and eat my sandwiches—I just can't. But that doesn't necessarily mean that I am a weakling, as you always imagine."

"I am so fond of you, Firilei, just as you are——"

"Now I will tell you a secret, Hele, and you must believe me. I have composed three songs. I have taken those beautiful words of Hölderlin, they gave me no peace until I had set them to music—oh ! I was so happy, so at home, so in harmony with myself ! Gebhardt thinks there is something in them. Perhaps they will be sung one day ? Perhaps something like that would convince my father, don't you think ? Oh ! Hele, dear, dear Hele, perhaps it would convince you as well ? They belong to you, those songs, and if you believe in me I shall succeed. Am I not different since I have had you ? "

"Yes, you are a little different. More of a man."

"And besides—I have not yet had you—completely," said Rainer softly.

"You must give me time, Firilei. Wait for me."

"Yes. I am waiting. I am a champion at being patient—for you. . . . But you mustn't expect too much from me—you, too. . . ."

"There, there—come," said Helene, and put her arms round his neck. She embraced him with a gesture of singular tenderness. She cupped the back of his head in her hand, and his hair was fine and warm to the tips of her fingers as she kissed him. A woodpecker hammered near by, and from the stream below arose the notes of a concertina—the sounds of a Sunday afternoon in the country.

An hour later they all met again below, near the boats, and now they had arranged to have a bathe. The sun shone full on the flat meadow bank. Dragon-flies hummed

high and low on their silvery wings. Even the frog had appeared again. Two children were shouting happily downstream, already splashing in the water; and by the opposite bank the small heads of swimmers were clearly visible, gliding over the waves. Meier was already sitting in his bathing drawers in the boat. With a few strokes of their oars, they reached the middle of the stream. The two girls had taken one boat and the boys had the other. They undressed. The indescribably joyful anticipation of the first bathe of the summer ran tingling through their limbs. Their young bodies emerged from beneath their clothes—they had put on their bathing suits in the morning, and all was quick and simple. Meier was the first in the water, and with much splashing and spluttering he reappeared downstream. Rainer followed him and immediately started swimming against the stream. He was an unexpectedly good swimmer and Helene watched, with a feeling of satisfaction, as he made headway with long strokes against the current.

"Is it cold?" she called.

"Dreadfully cold!" answered Meier. "Twelve degrees at the most!"

"Marvellous!" cried Rainer, and in an exuberant delight in the joy of swimming, he plunged under water and allowed himself to be borne downstream to the boats. Friedel stretched one small white foot over the edge of the boat and drew it back again.

"Brrr!" she said, horrified. She had a very white body with rosy shadows. Her breasts were scarcely indicated, her arms were those of a child, and her neck was long and arched. Helene stood up in the boat, stretched herself, let out one yell—a kind of falcon's cry—and dived head first into the water. Oh! that green, clear coldness that took the breath away and burned into the tips of one's fingers! She wanted to swim

against the stream, too, but it drove her sideways against the bank. Rainer stopped, breathless, by the boats.

"Well, Kranich!" he said. "Aren't you keen?"

Kranich was sitting still dressed in the boat, his empty shirt-sleeve flapping feebly in the warm breeze, and he gazed hungrily at the water.

"Keen!" he said passionately.

On the terrace of the restaurant sat a party which had recently arrived in a car. They had looked for seats under the old elms, and had been stared at rather hard by those already sitting there, for they had a nigger with them, a black man in faultless clothes, with a fine figure. His name was Samson, Harryman Samson, and he had been imported from Paris by May Kolding. She sat opposite him and looked with an almost shameless delight at his shoulders, which moved in a foreign, lissom, rippling way under his coat. Yvonne Pastouri, who out of courtesy to the nigger was speaking French, was telling Dr. Kolding of the marvellous talent and the fame of this Samson. He was a painter. He had become the rage of the season in Paris. He painted women exclusively—black, brown and white women. The white ones were the best, he commented with a smile which revealed a flash of his large teeth. He had had women from all parts of the world as his models, and he tried to find a comparison for them now in German.

"English women," he said, "is like this: apple blossom when young. When old—brrr!—scarecrows! French women, very—oh! yes, very light: dance on the open hand" (he spread out his light palms so that it almost seemed possible to see a tiny, dainty French-woman dancing there) "*des ombres délicieuses*—here and there. But Cherman woman—heavy. Grows in the soil. Like big tree. So—*regardez là-bas!*"

Down there where he pointed with his long light-nailed finger, Helene was striding across the slope of the bank with Meier and Rainer following her. She was feeling a little cold now, and, as she stretched her arms in the warm sunny air, it really did look rather like a tree stretching its branches up into the light.

"That's a splendid creature down there," said Dr. Kolding, purposely to annoy Frau Yvonne : and he was fairly successful.

Ambrosius, whose appearance during the last few weeks had been somehow puffy and unhealthy, and whose cigar now hung loosely from the corner of his mouth, only turned his head at this moment towards the river bank. So far he had been sitting abstracted and silent at the end of the table, scratching patterns on the table-cloth.

"Gudrun walking on the shore?" he said. "Not bad——"

"Good. Very good," criticised Samson. "Knee good—small. Otherwise Cherman woman has knee like plate. This one good. But the most important thing is missing——"

"There's another white rabbit crawling on the bank," said May Kolding. "How sweet! Now they are all lying down in the sun to dry. Very pure. They are lying side by side like tin soldiers in a box. A female between two males. Do look, Yvonne!"

"Don't be jealous, May dear!"

"There's a cripple with them; he doesn't count——"

"Or else he counts double!" said Dr. Kolding, knowingly.

Ambrosius remained turned towards the river bank. He looked with clouded and unseeing eyes into the patch of sun where the young bodies were now stretched peacefully in the grass.

"Some of my students are among them," he said,



rousing a little. He was possessed by a vague longing, but for what, he did not know.

"Something is missing," explained the painter in fluent French. "Both of them down there are beautiful. But there is something lacking. The erotic appeal is missing. You ought to know our women, dark women, *la, la*!—they are of a very different flavour!"

"Leave them alone, they are all right," said Ambrosius. "Erotic! What on earth would those poor devils of students do if they were erotic into the bargain?"

"Oh, blessed innocence!" sighed May Kolding. "If you had the least idea! If you only knew, Professor—of all the repressed and suppressed creatures there are running about. Everyone with his little complex to bear."

Meanwhile, down by the river, they had dried themselves. The sun sank below the hills on the other side of the river, and immediately the valley began to fill with shadows. The copper-red frocks were pulled over the cool skins, which were shot with pleasant little shivers. A slender, snow-white moon swung, unreal and far too early, into the heavens, and the outlines of the hills became black. The concertina was being played again. A small train whistled and puffed into view on the other bank, and crept shrieking into a tunnel. The nets were taken in. The Pomeranian barked, and a frog began to croak passionately. Electric lamps lit up beneath the elms. There was a smell of roast potatoes and of Sunday. A glass verandah blazed into light, making it seem, by contrast, much darker outside. Suddenly, with a damp breeze from the river, the evening was there.

Someone on the terrace waved with a red motoring scarf to the young people, who had begun to busy themselves with their boats. Yvonne Pastouri put her hands to her mouth and called loudly and imperiously to Helene

Willfüer and Rainer, whom she had only recognised when they were dressed.

"Rainer!" she called. "Little monk! Come and play the piano. We want to dance."

Down by the river there were murmurings and consultations. Then the chains of the boats clanked. The departure had been postponed and, a little subdued, they obeyed the summons.

"Dancing, good lord, dancing!" said Helene and pinched Rainer's arm. "That's the one thing that has been missing to-day. A river trip, walking, swimming and dancing. It's all simply too marvellous to be true. But you mustn't play the piano the whole time, Firlei mine. I want to dance with you, just with you, only with you."

"Yes, Hele, we'll dance afterwards," he murmured, and looked thirstily at her lips.

Meier made his best bow to the Frau Professor. Yvonne set everything going with a few fluttering movements of her musician's hands, and in a moment the verandah was opened up and Rainer was seated at the badly tuned piano, trying a squeaking pedal. In a moment the black-skinned Samson had white-skinned Friedel in his arms ("chocolate with whipped cream," commented May Kolding), and in a moment the haunting, languorous notes of a tango set them all in motion. Faces arose from the garden and were pressed against the glass walls, the little room filled up, and everybody was infected with this gaiety. Rainer knew a few dance tunes. The wrong notes in the bass did not matter, but his rhythm was uncertain and annoying, and was commented upon in murmurs. Meier, very excited and perspiring, danced a kind of polka with a highly coloured lady difficult to place. Kolding in his immaculate motoring clothes danced with Yvonne, and again with Yvonne, and then, when

Ambrosius' glances made him uncomfortable, he danced once with Helene Willfürer—and then again with Yvonne.

"What's the matter?" asked Rainer as he played, feeling that Helene was standing behind him.

"Oh—nothing! That Kolding fellow was rather impudent while we were dancing."

"Impudent? With you? Shall I——"

"No, don't. All you need do is not to play so many wrong notes. His knees are impudent—that's all. He presses himself against you as he dances. I can't stand that. You ought to come."

"Yes. I'll come directly."

Helene squeezed along the wall, keeping out of the dancers' way, and there she found Ambrosius and Kranich. The two men were standing a little apart against the wall and were watching the hot, dusty, whirling crowd. They both wore the same strange, wry smile as they stood watching without dancing, and each had his air of pain and loneliness. They seemed like two troubled human worlds, each steering its separate course.

"Professor?" said Helene timidly and a little saddened, "don't you want to dance? It is so nice. Will you dance with me—may I——?"

"Very kind of you. No, thanks. I should only be like a bull in a china shop. No, thanks very much. I'm enjoying myself thoroughly like this," he said, and kept his eyes fixed on the dancing crowd.

Helene wandered on.

"Well—how about you, Kranich?" she asked, helpfully. "Won't you try with me?"

"I? Oh, no—really! I don't care for dancing, not a bit. I'd much rather watch—much rather. It gives me great pleasure, really, Fräulein Helene," he said, and his mouth became strained with the effort. And then the two men were left standing against the wall again,

each with his wry smile which they imagined was not noticeable.

"Good heavens! Little monk, what sort of dirge are you playing?" cried the Pastouri stopping, out of breath, behind Rainer. "That won't do! Now you are going to dance with me and Monsieur Samson will play—come along!"

Heavens! What music was this that this black Samson now began? He immediately hammered a rhythm out of the old box of wires that raced through the blood like wine. Syncopation poured forth, bass chords drummed, discords shrieked, all the noises of the primeval forests screamed through that respectable glass verandah. In a flash everything solid seemed to melt away, every feeling to be laid bare, a wild nostalgia, a moaning passion to fill the air, loosening the limbs of the women and making them close their eyes. Yvonne, who had changed from Rainer to Kolding, pressed herself close against him; and Helene—oh, Helene did not know what was the matter with her. A black devil with a flashing smile just sat at the piano and pulled his passionate marionettes hither and thither about the room; the lights seemed to go round, the walls seemed to go round. There was Ambrosius and there Kranich, smiling, steadfastly smiling—and then there was only this nigger rhythm which seemed to bewitch everything.

Heaven knows how long this dance went on, and there is no telling whether it had any effect on subsequent events or changed the destinies of any of the dancers. Fundamentally, it was nothing but a primitive call, that suffered no hindrance but called straight to the blood; just a summer evening's pleasure; an impromptu entertainment between twilight and dark. One hesitates to lay any responsibility for giving a new turn to events at the feet of this racially strange and racially youthful

painter, with his bewitching dance music, though one suspects that there the responsibility lay. He makes only a momentary appearance in our story; yesterday he was in Paris; to-morrow he will be in Frankfurt, and next year in Yokohama, and as a person we are not concerned with him. But his dance music—that primæval dance in the glass verandah—*that* will ring in our ears for a long time yet, as the beginning of many an experience. . . .

Kranich, who had soon escaped to the garden, was standing on the dew-wet steps leading down to the river meadow, when Meier came up to him.

“Kranich,” whispered Meier excitedly, “make my excuses to the girls, do you hear? I am going to spend the night here. I am urgently required. Understand? ‘Oh, lovely night, oh, night of love!’ what? So, farewell for the present. You’ll be tactful, won’t you?”

“Very well,” said Kranich.

Beneath the laburnum boughs there was whispering, the sound of a kiss. White arms, closed eyes, the red scarf of the Pastouri fluttering limply and heavily in the night air. Kranich moved away. Ambrosius brushed past him, heavy, massive, oppressed—a bearer of burdens.

“Can you give me a light, Professor?” Kranich asked, raising his voice.

Ambrosius paused with his cigar, and the little spark gleamed. The warning was understood under the laburnums, and someone ran away on dainty little feet. All was now dark and silent in the glass verandah. Gravel crunched, and a gentle night breeze whispered in the tops of the elm-trees; a train whistled in the distance. Beneath the light of the last lamp, a motor car was being started up and the engine coughed into action. *Srrr* . . . it went towards the street, and then everything was quiet. By now many frogs were croaking down below, and the

night was dense and impenetrable. Kranich felt his way across the wet meadows down to the boats and lit the Chinese lanterns which they had brought with them. Marx came strolling up, cigarette in mouth.

"Where is Meier?" he asked.

"Busy. Asks to be excused," said Kranich.

"Hm!" Marx cleared his throat. "Kranich, old man, I want to ask you something before Friedel comes. Go back with Rainer in his boat. We—you see—we are so rarely alone—and after all we are engaged to one another. Don't be angry with me."

"That's all right, of course," said Kranich, and loosened the boat chain with his one hand. Rainer and Helene came up and settled themselves in their boat.

"How pretty it looks with the lanterns, look, Hele," said Rainer, adding as he pushed off from the bank, "You will be going with Marx this time?"

"Yes, of course," Kranich answered, standing on the bank.

The boats slid away, gently turning downstream. He was left behind alone—an entirely superfluous creature in the midst of the summer night.

Ah, well! That's just the way of things, he thought at first. I shall have to hire a boat and row home alone. And he took a few steps towards the house. But it suddenly occurred to him: I can't row any more. I had forgotten that.

It hurt keenly to realise this, left alone as he was by the couples in the boats with their red lanterns. I will go home on foot, he thought. The sloes are flowering now by the roadside and perhaps there are already some glow-worms about. There are so many beautiful things still left in the world—for a fellow like me. He started on his way. He was so lonely. He did not even have a shadow in the darkness. . . .

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"Let me row," said Helene in the boat. "I must do something. I don't know how to contain myself. There will be a bang and I shall just burst—that's what I feel like."

"And I? Am I to sit still like a pasha and watch you rowing?"

"Yes. You are Pasha Firilei. And your beautiful slave is rowing you. The most beautiful, eh?"

"The most beautiful. The most beautiful of all. Hele——"

"Do look! The water is quite red as it drips from the oars."

"You have been so lovely to-day, Hele! So lovely that it has been almost unbearable. You are quite changed."

"Am I? Am I changed? I feel it myself, Firilei."

"To begin with, when we were bathing, and when you were lying there in the grass—so lovely, Hele, I did not realise it. I have always been fond of you, but I never knew how lovely you were. You ought never to be clothed. You have feet like a queen. . . ."

"Now everything is red from our lantern, do look."

"Is it red now, Hele? When I dream of you, you are always naked."

"Do you dream of me like that, Firilei?"

"Yes, that is how I dream of you. Later on, when we are always together, you must always be naked, day and night. We will build a wall round our house, and every night I shall think of a new song—later on."

Night. The black stream below, shot with red reflections. The black sky above, and everything without shape or outline. A rocket shot up from the hills and burst into nothing. Oars dipping. Red, falling drops. A girl's face in the red light of the lantern.

"Are you fond of me, Hele?"

"Yes, Firilei."

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"When you were dancing with me and when you were so close to me, I wanted to ask you something. May I ask you now?"

"Yes—go on."

"Will it—be—to-day? Hele? Will it?"

Silence. Rowing. Steady breathing.

"What are you waiting for, Hele? We could be so happy, so unutterably, ecstatically happy together. Why do you torment me? You are free. What is holding you back?"

"Do I torment you? I don't want to do that, my poor Firilei. I am waiting—for what? I don't know; for an urge, until I feel that it is the only thing I can possibly do, a great, great occasion."

"Don't you feel like that yet?"

"I am afraid. I am so afraid," whispered Helene, clenching her fingers round the oars.

"You little girl! You little girl!"

Night. Black, boundless, flowing night. A flash of summer lightning. A rocket. On the horizon the irregular silhouette of the castle and then darkness again. Even the lantern burned out now. Suddenly in the deep, unreal darkness, Rainer began to tell a story.

"When I was seventeen," he said, "I went with a girl for the first time. My friend had taken me along. First we drank coffee. Somebody played the piano very well. It made me sad, that was quite distinct, but everything else was confused. Then someone took me into her room. It smelt of lily-of-the-valley soap. That is unforgettable. Then she undressed herself and came to me. I had an indescribable fear of her. I felt rather sick, and I was so clumsy and ignorant. The girl was kind and friendly to me—I don't believe she was much older than I was. Afterwards we went downstairs again. The same person was still playing the piano. I drank a



cognac and waited for my friend. I thought over and over again—never again, never, never again.”

“And——? Firilei——?”

“No. I never did it again, Hele. I am twenty-one now. I went with a girl just that once and then never again. I can be strong, Hele, over things which concern my innermost self. I have kept control of myself. I have saved myself up. I didn’t want little things, but the real thing, the big thing. I am not easily satisfied, Hele. With me the urge is there, the feeling that it is the only possible thing to do. You must belong to me. I am telling you this now quite seriously and calmly. I was drunk with you before—but now I am calm. You must belong to me. And you can’t deal in half measures any more, either. You must give yourself completely, Hele, if you love me—or not at all.”


Must I, thought Helene Willfürer. She went on rowing and rowing and so imparted a rhythm to her circling, whirling thoughts. Must I really? Yes, I suppose so. Probably it must be. I am free, yes, Firilei, I am—and I have no one to account to but myself. But am I ready?

Dipping oars. Dipping oars. Dipping oars. Somewhere inside her was an immense tenderness. I would like to hold you quite quietly in my arms, my Firilei, and that is all. I am a little girl still, perhaps that is it. Or else the great rapture is not meant for me, such as I am—so frank and innocent and shy. But half measures are not for me, either. And so it will have to happen—to-day or soon.

“To-day,” whispered Rainer into her thoughts. “I cannot let you go again, it drags my heart from my body. Give me one word, my love, my love.”

“Yes. Yes—Firilei.”

“Come, put the oars away. Let it drift. Give me your lips.”



Helene shipped the oars. The old bridge had already appeared, a blacker shadow in the blackness ; two lights drifted away on the stream.

"I will let it drift," said Helene, as though she were wandering in her sleep, and laid her folded hands in her lap. . . .

Grasmücke's widow lay awake waiting for her young lady. Very late she heard the steps, the lock, the door. She heard the stairs creak secretively and then all was quiet.

And then she heard, crossing the crooked deal boards, the bare feet of two people.







A HOT June morning in the Stink Room. Plain Meier, the laboratory assistant, was having a little chat with Kränzle, the laboratory servant. Kränzle was washing out flasks, whole families of flasks of all sizes, while the assistant was shaking up an ether solution with sodium hydroxide in a separating funnel in order to remove cresol. Fräulein Willfüer, meanwhile, was standing at the bench developing bromide vapours, lovely red-brown vapours, from which dibrombenzol was to generate.

"I don't know, Kränzle," said Meier, "but I haven't felt at all happy about our Chief lately."

"You're quite right, *Herr Assistent*."

"He drifts about the place in the most absent-minded way. Sometimes I'm afraid he'll have the whole place about our ears when he's experimenting. Yesterday he let fulminate of mercury explode in heaps all over the shop."

"And the Professor looks so ill. He makes me feel quite sorry for him."

"Ill? Well, I wouldn't exactly say that. He is putting on weight. He begins to look like a hippopotamus, to my mind."

"That's just the point, *Herr Assistent*. That's just what is wrong. You see, when something is not quite right with fat people, they get thin; and when something goes wrong with thin people, they get fat. It's always

like that. Well, I know what is the cause of it all. If I wanted to talk—good lord! You see, I am very friendly with the Professor's cook——”

“Oh? So something's up at home? The mistress, eh? A beautiful lady, but a bit flighty, what? Well, Kränzle?”

“It's not to be wondered at, Doctor. You see, chemistry is a decent occupation. A person forms a decent character from chemistry. But to go travelling about with a violin giving concerts—no good ever came of that. And now she's carrying on with a nigger. That's too much of a good thing. Frau Geheimrat won't have anything more to do with her, that's certain—and the other ladies will soon have had enough of it.”

This conversation ebbed and flowed past Fräulein Willfüer's ears. The day was hot, a heavy, damp heat, and, in addition, the Bunsen burner was alight. Steam was painting arabesques on the beakers. In a tube the red was rising. Water gurgling from the taps seemed to say something dreadful, endlessly, endlessly, endlessly. Fräulein Willfüer's knees felt heavy and tired. Her head was confused with the everlasting vapours. She felt oppressed, weighed down, stifled. She took a pipette from the stand and took a few steps across the damp tiles—thinking, I will get myself a stool—suddenly everything started to revolve about her. The walls came rushing from all sides and toppled over her. There were glasses and yet more glasses. An explosion? she thought, heard something clinking—and then it was like being at the bottom of the sea. Fantastic shapes floated behind green veils——

“The cook says that that Dr. Kolding comes secretly.”

“Good God! What's the matter over there, Kränzle?”

Fräulein Willfüer lay flat on the floor. The pipette was broken. A little blood oozed from a small cut on her hand. Her lips were white, her eyes closed.

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"Good lord—has the girl fainted on our hands? Come on, quick—under the pump, Kränzle. It's the very devil of an atmosphere in here anyway."

Fräulein Willfüer was picked up and carried into the laboratory, to the pump kept ready for such emergencies. Work was suspended and a little crowd gathered. Fräulein Willfüer came to and murmured something. Immediately afterwards she sat up with a jerk and said, severely :

"How stupid! What a ridiculous thing to do!"

Her hair was clinging damply to her forehead. Her hands were still trembling, but she had regained her composure.

"Since when have you taken to giving us treats of this sort, Fräulein Willfüer?" asked Ambrosius, who was just inspecting the laboratory.

"I really don't know. It's nothing, Professor—really."

"Perhaps you liberated prussic acid?"

"Nothing—only bromide vapours," reported Meier, officially.

"Well, lie down for a bit. I don't want to see you in the lab. any more to-day, do you understand? I've no use for overworked students. Can you go home alone?"

"Of course," said Fräulein Willfüer. She took off her overall outside and groped her way into the sunlight, into the noise of the market which crowded up to the Institute with its colourful stalls. It's not possible, she thought. It is quite and utterly impossible. A thing like that could not happen. Oh God: oh God! it isn't possible——

In the laboratory the student Strehl delivered a little commentary.

"Nobody ever yet fainted from bromide vapours," he said. "Those are feminine ills; nothing but hysterical feminine ills—believe me."

At about noon Fräulein Willfüer appeared at the swimming-bath in the river, which was fairly empty at that time. She fetched a bath-towel and bathing costume and withdrew into a cabin. Inside it was twilight, and there was a smell of water and tarred wood. On the wall shivered the reflection of the ripples flowing beneath the boards. Fräulein Willfüer undressed and stood naked for a minute. She looked down at her body, which seemed to have become uncanny and which caused a strange fear to envelop her for certain reasons. She put her hands on her body, just where a gently curving line defined the small of the waist. It isn't possible, she thought again. That was the one thought which hampered in her head day and night, hour after hour.

She left the cabin in her bathing suit, crossed the wet boards, which were grey from water and sun; greeted a group of young people who were lying lazily in the heat; gave Friedel Mannsfeldt her hand—Marx had not come; no one knew where the boy was spending all his time these days—and bowed to May Kolding, who was sitting on a bench with a long-limbed young man.

Fräulein Willfüer, after a moment's hesitation, went up the steps to the high-diving board; dived, pulled herself flat in the air and struck the surface of the water with her stomach. My God! how that hurt, she thought, almost unconscious under the water—and clambered out again by the little steps. Immediately she went to the diving board again; dived, crash! the water once more. Diving board, jump, pain, green foam, sunlight; again and again and again—the whole swimming-bath was now watching and criticising the dives.

"That's right, go on!" said the long-limbed young man. "Just carry on like that, broadside on, slap into the water! Damn it! how it resounds! That's right, my

girl. You'll get it right in the end. Now her blood is up, do look, May."

"I think there is something queer about it. She is a deep one, the Willfür. She is letting off steam," May Kolding decided, becoming curious.

"There—she can't carry on any more. Back into her cabin," said the long-limbed one.

Fräulein Willfür waded, with palpitating heart, back to her cabin and pulled the wet bathing suit from her body. She listened to herself. Deep down inside, after all those exertions and shocks, there were pains now, very faint, drawing pains in the stomach; pains that were rather surmised than actually felt.

Help me, dear Lord! It really is not possible, she thought.

She left the bath and returned to the laboratory.

Fräulein Willfür entered the small, dark shop in which bookseller Kranich lived. She inhaled the indefinable smell of old books, and it made her feel a little queer.

"Good day, Kranich."

"Oh, what a pleasure! A distinguished visitor! And what can I do for you, Fräulein Willfür?"

"Nothing—I've only come for a little chat. You know that my funds don't allow me to indulge in any extravagances. I'd much rather dump some of my books on you—those that I don't need any more."

"Yes, certainly. I should be very pleased—do!" said Kranich, describing cheerful arabesques of help in the air with his wooden hand. He was now able to move the elbow joint of his artificial limb and zealously made use of it.

"May I have a cigarette, please?" asked Helene, with a catch in her breath.

“Of course. Since when have you taken to smoking, Fräulein Willfürer? I have never noticed it before.”

“Yes, I smoke now. Everyone does in time. Now I have a great craving for it. I have become a terrible addict. It helps me a lot.”

“Yes—but you work far too hard, and in this heat too. By the way, have you seen anything of Marx? I am worried about that boy. There is something wrong with him. He avoids me. He is never to be seen. I believe he even avoids Friedel.”

“Oh dear! Something has gone wrong with everybody suddenly. Something is wrong with Professor Ambrosius, something is wrong with Marx, something is wrong with me.”

“With you, Helene?”

“Oh! nothing to speak of. Just overwork. I have to keep at it. My funds are only sufficient for a short time.”

“And Rainer? Everything is all right with him, I hope?”

“Yes. Rainer is doing splendidly now. He will soon be taking his exam.”

“They are telling a wonderful tale about him. He had to make a diagnosis—according to the Geheimrat, it was a thrombosis of the liver, and the head attendant had even said as much on the quiet to the students, including Rainer. But our Rainer, pigheaded as he is, diagnosed something else. Nothing more nor less than an ordinary Lænnec’s cirrhosis, he said, and stuck to it. The Geheimrat went for him! Afterwards, at the post-mortem—great surprise. Rainer had diagnosed correctly and the Geheimrat incorrectly! Half the clinic is talking about it, though only *sotto voce*, of course.”

“Yes, you see—that is what he is like. He hasn’t

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told me anything about it. He is quiet, but he has his points—and people like us sometimes seem slow and stupid beside him.”

“Nonsense, Fräulein Willfür ! ”

“No, it’s true, Kranich. I am now trying to become a little cleverer. I am getting nearer medical chemistry now, and that means that one must have a wider field of vision. That is really why I have come. I want to nose around a little, may I ? ”

“Certainly. As much as you like. But in which direction—I mean, medical or natural history ? ”

“Medical—but something of a popular nature, not anything advanced or technical. People like me don’t know the simplest things. Something like ‘Anatomy of the Female,’ or ‘Life of the Child before Birth’—things which the Grasmücke would know more about than I do.”

“Yes, certainly,” said Kranich, wondering a little to himself, and he piled up all kinds of books in front of Fräulein Willfür. A cloud of dust arose, a tiny universe of spinning microcosms, glittering in the sun, which gradually slowed down and sank again on to the counter hidden in the shadow. Fräulein Willfür bent her burning face over the books and hunted confusedly among titles and pictures. She was ashamed ; she was dreadfully ashamed. It was difficult to lie, and perhaps the painful, unspoken truth had glimmered through the thin excuse and evasion ?

No. Kranich was smoking his cigarette and looking unconcernedly out of the window. But his assistant was looking her way.

“There—this will do splendidly. Will you lend it to me for two days ? You will get it back punctually and unharmed, you know that.”

“Of course. Don’t mention it. Please remember me

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to Rainer when you see him. We don't need to note this down," Kranich added and waved away the assistant, who had hurried up in a business-like manner.

Kranich must be feverish, thought Fräulein Willfür, from the way in which he squeezed her hand ; her nerves were overstrained and sensitive.

She put the book in her case in which she already had Henrich's *Theory of Organic Chemistry*, and hurried round the corner with quick, impatient steps, down to the river, where there were a few benches. Tiny, white prickly fruits were already falling from the chestnut trees and floating downstream under the arches of the bridge, towards the plains.

Fräulein Willfür opened the book, and read—methodically, but still in despair—first studying the index and then turning to page 37: "The Life of the Child before Birth."

In the square near the church stood a few small booths where fruit was offered for sale—the first cherries, the first strawberries and, mixed up with them, a few roses, some wallflowers. Fräulein Willfür passed by. Strawberries! she thought and inhaled the scent of the fruit with a wild and exaggerated pleasure. She did not feel well. She had a dry taste in her mouth ; and a smell of chlorine from the laboratory clung to her clothes. Strawberries! she thought and stood still and looked longingly at them.

"Strawberries, lady?"

No, thought Helene Willfür. Strawberries are not for people like me. We are not rich enough for that, but they are marvellous. I shall have to be content with their scent.

She forced herself to go on, across the street and over to the Corn Market. She had almost reached home

when she stood still and reflected. She was hungry ; a greedy hunger had taken possession of her. She had a foolish idea, that she need only eat those strawberries and, once her hunger was satisfied, she would be relieved of everything—the sickness, the burden and the uncanny feeling.

She turned round, waited patiently until a tram-car had left the road clear ; arrived in front of the booth again and stood still.

“ Strawberries, lady ? ”

Fräulein Willfür fled. She left the booth and took the opposite direction, towards the main street. But that's a sure sign, she thought, this ravenous hunger, this greediness, this ungovernable feeling. And now it seemed to her that everything would be all right if only she were able to get the better of this hunger and longing ; as though by the suppression of the symptoms, she could dispose of the cause itself.

At the next corner she stopped again, took out her purse, reckoned, calculated, considered. Suddenly she turned round and hastily approached the booth again.

“ Strawberries, lady ? ”

Helene bought strawberries, a whole expensive pound, and the excitement of it almost took her breath away. While she was still crossing the tram-lines, she began to eat with a kind of blind, urgent sensation. Well, and what now ?

The strawberries had no taste.

They were tepid, flat, sour, without any aroma, and there were little particles of sand sticking to them. Fräulein Willfür inhaled their scent a few times—but that did not help. She went home with slow, dragging, hopeless steps, as though those strawberries had sealed her fate.

“ There—I've brought you some strawberries,” she

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said to Gulrapp, who had long since returned from Leyden, and was working at the mountainous task of her degree; working with her boxes of notes, excerpts and scraps of paper spread all over the table.

"Strawberries? You? For me? You must be completely mad. Aren't you having any?"

"No, thanks. I don't like them. I don't feel very well," said Fräulein Willfüer, and sank down on the edge of her bed.

The scent of the strawberries filled the whole room and became a torture to her overstrained nerves. The Gulrapp ate and sighed with pleasure occasionally. Fräulein Willfüer locked her hands tightly round her knees and crumpled up; she stared at the Kwannon, Goddess of Mercy, which in return seemed to look at Helene's bed with the sly, knowing smile of a silent witness.

Fräulein Willfüer appeared in the ground floor apartment, and found the worthy widow fixing eyes which opened and shut into a doll's head, by the last gleams of daylight. Nervous as Fräulein Willfüer had become, this sight disturbed her, and the little arms and legs which hung in rows from a board on the wall, reminded her somewhat of a miniature dissecting room. It made her feel faint.

"What a funny sight, Frau Grasmücke! You are really half a doctor!"

"Yes, one has to know how one thing fits into another in our business, true enough. Is the young lady fond of dolls?"

"Not very, Frau Grasmücke. No, I never really played with dolls, now I come to think of it."

"The young lady was probably a very clever child and interested in more brainy things?"

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"Fairly, Frau Grasmücke. But what I wanted to ask you was—could you lend me a little old saucepan? It needn't be a good one."

"What does the young lady want it for?"

"Oh, nothing much. Something chemical. I want to brew myself some medicine. My inside is not quite in order."

"That comes of the heat. Well, I hope it may do you some good."

"Yes. Thank you. I'll bring the saucepan back later," said Fräulein Willfüer, disappearing in the direction of the stairs.

Looks queer, my young lady does, thought Frau Grasmücke as she went. Well, well—love burns, that is an old story.

Fräulein Willfüer went up into her "digs," went behind the screen, lit the lamp and the spirit stove, and started to cook. She collected various little paper bags, drugs, powders, drops, and set about a kind of miniature alchemy at the back there. Odours arose. There was a strong smell of cinnamon, of herbs, of bitter almonds, and of something slightly repugnant. Finally, the brew was sweetened with sugar. It was an original preparation of this young chemist—her first independent work, so to say. Gulrapp at the window began to cough.

"Good lord! Whatever kind of a devilish concoction are you brewing behind there?"

"Oh, I'm only mixing a little medicine. I must take something to put me right."

"Medicine? What's the matter with you?"

"Oh—nothing really. Only just—not quite right."

Gulrapp's horn-rimmed spectacles peered across the room.

"You aren't going to fall ill on my hands, Helene?" she asked, and in this single question something suddenly


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sprang to life—a tenderness, a fear, a secret, hidden, wasted love.

“Me, ill? Nonsense, Gulrapp!”

“Well, that’s all right then,” said Gulrapp, hiding her feeling away again, and controlling her tone of voice and the passionate entreaty of her outstretched hand.

“Your mixtum compositum stinks like the pest. If I were you, I’d get Rainer to give you some medicine.”

“Oh, no! I wouldn’t like to ask Rainer for anything like that. That would be ridiculous,” said Fräulein Willfüer, taking the saucepan, which was still steaming, and trying to drink.

“What does it taste like?” asked Gulrapp, ironically.

It tasted vile. It had such an appalling taste that, for one second, Helene Willfüer was almost prepared to let things take their natural course rather than swallow this concoction. But then she put this impossible, unthinkable idea from her, pulled herself together and began to drink. By degrees she gulped down the whole of the brownish-red liquid. Her face was covered with perspiration, though at the same time her temples were icy cold. For a while afterwards, she sat still on the edge of the bed, concentrating on the scent of the flower-pots in front of the window, which her sharpened senses were able to perceive through all the medicinal odours, and abandoned herself to a feeling of hope for the results of her medicine. Half an hour later she went out and was violently sick. She came back, very pale and exhausted, washed her hands and face in cold water and then carefully cleaned out the Grasmücke’s old saucepan.

The widow, on her part, had also lit a lamp and was thinking things over. The smell of cinnamon and bitter almonds pervaded the whole house. It had drifted down the ghostly staircase and filtered through the cracks of

the door. The widow inhaled it through distended nostrils, analysed it, and understood.

Oh ho! she thought. She was completely gifted with second sight where the affairs of her lodgers were concerned, this widow Grasmücke.

Fräulein Willfürer reappeared in the ground floor apartment. Her face was white, with a greenish, leaden tinge, but she smiled cheerfully.

"Here's your saucepan again, with many thanks."

"Has it been of any assistance to the young lady?" asked the worthy widow.

"Oh—I don't think so, Frau Grasmücke. I'm feeling pretty rotten just now. Perhaps it was too strong."

"The young gentleman—the one who is always coming—isn't he a medical student? I would entrust myself to his care," said the Grasmücke. The emphasis on the word "entrust" sounded strange, but it was applied intentionally.

"Rainer? No, he wouldn't be of any use. It's no good going to young medical students like him."

"Then I would advise the young lady to go to a proper doctor. They can give you advice for everything," said the Grasmücke and looked at Helene. Helene gave her a hunted glance—looked away and then looked back again. The Grasmücke kept her eyes fixed upon her with a wonderful, womanly understanding.

"Do you mean—Frau Grasmücke——?" faltered Helene, with relief. She let herself go now, simply let herself go. . . .

"Yes. I know of cases—only last month one of them helped our milkwoman, the thin one, who always brings the milk. She entrusted herself to a doctor."

"The milkwoman—was she ill?"

"She was in trouble," said the Grasmücke significantly.

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"I see—well, good night; and many thanks for the saucepan," Helene replied and opened the door. The Grasmücke, in her nondescript wig, took up a doll's head again.

"I can find out the address," she said, without expression and without looking up.

Fräulein Willfürer dumbly closed the door behind her.

"Yes, please, do," she said outside, breathing deeply in the darkness of the crooked stairs.

Fritz Rainer, as he turned the corner of the Marstallstrasse, saw a slim young student coming out of the old grey doorway of a house. Why, there is Marx at last, he thought, and whistled their usual signal. Marx did not hear. He went on his way in a peculiarly furtive manner. His back seemed blind and deaf. Once he stood still. Rainer lengthened his stride but, just before he caught up with him, the little fellow wheeled round sharply and zigzagged between cars and trams through the traffic of the main street. On the opposite side he paused in front of a placard—stood rooted to the spot in front of a cheerful poster of a new film. Rainer whistled in vain. The youngster seemed queer to him. He whistled and, since this had no effect, he also crossed the road. Suddenly Marx turned round and walked quickly away. Rainer ran after him and caught him up shortly afterwards, as Marx stood still again, staring, lost in thought, into the window of a cheesemonger's. There, in front of this cheesemonger's, this brief conversation took place.

"Morning, Marx, old chap. At last we meet again. No one has seen anything of you lately."

Marx murmured something inaudible about work.

"Work? Nose to the grindstone? But Helene complains that you are slacking and not keeping up with your work. What's the matter with you?"

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Marx shrugged his shoulders. "Nothing," he said, thrusting his hands into his pockets.

"And Friedel? She's running about alone with a very miserable look in her eyes? Have you been up to some monkey tricks?"

No answer—just a shrug of the shoulders.

"Have you quarrelled, children?"

"Quarrelled!" said the little fellow. He clenched his teeth. The veins stood out on his forehead, but to no avail. Tears would come into his eyes, and now he looked like a pathetic little boy.

"Marx, old chap, what's wrong? Get it off your chest. You make me anxious. Has anything happened to you?" Rainer asked, and put his hands on the boy's shoulders. Marx swallowed hard and nodded his head.

"What?"

"I've just been to see a doctor," said Marx. He said it so indistinctly and with such trembling lips that he had to repeat it. Meanwhile he stared into the cheesemonger's window, fighting pitifully for control of himself. It took Rainer a few seconds to understand.

"Oh—I see. So that's the trouble, is it?" he said, and unconsciously took his hands from the lad's thin shoulders, only to put them back, firmly and reassuringly.

"Look here, old chap—we must thrash this out. Accidents like that will happen. Is it—bad?"

"The worst possible," Marx whispered, burrowing with his hands in his pockets. He was wearing a good, pale grey suit, and looked so smart and well groomed, poor little fellow! There was so much candour in his glance and in his manner—and yet, there he stood, in front of the cheesemonger's shop in this dire extremity, making this confession. Rainer also stared at the fine assortment of cheeses and was silent for a moment. This affair had to be seen through.

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"How did it happen? How on earth did you come by such a thing?" he asked, beating a gentle, soothing rhythm on the young fellow's longish shoulders.

"Oh, in the way one does," said Marx. He could scarcely force his lips apart, but the story came out nevertheless. "In May we went for such a jolly picnic, didn't we? Don't you remember? The day we bathed for the first time and went into the woods and danced in the evening? You remember? A nigger played the piano. And then we rowed home in the boats—you with the Willfüer, and Friedel and I alone together. Then I saw Friedel home. It was such a marvellous night—and later on there was a thunderstorm. All that went to my head, and I was stifled indoors. I could not stay at home. And then I drank another coffee in the Blue Star—that's all. That's how these things happen."

"The waitress?" asked Rainer, still beating on Marx's shoulders with a firm, steady rhythm, which he recognised as a composition of Bach's.

"Yes, the waitress."

"The big one or the little one?" asked Rainer.

"The little one," was muttered in reply.

"Well, well! Poor chap!" murmured Rainer somewhat helplessly.

But now that Marx had thrown off his restraint, he had to unburden himself still more.

"Things like that shouldn't be allowed to happen, should they? But they do. And I'm not a swine, Rainer, really—you know that. I am awfully fond of Friedel—there's no question about that. But I am engaged, they entrust the girl to me and I run about at her side day in, day out, and am not allowed to touch her. That is simply torture—you can hardly imagine what it is like. And yet it would be quite impossible to touch Friedel, even if I had not given my word to her parents.

Yes, I gave them my word of honour and I have kept it. Now you know the whole filthy business. And then a stupid thing like this happens, and everything goes smash. One goes about torturing oneself for months, and then suddenly one loses one's head, and afterwards it's all up with one. Yes. Finished. Quite finished."

And with this, Marx took his hands out of his pockets and let them fall with such an evident gesture of hopelessness that Rainer began to comfort him as though he were a small child.

"It's not all up with you. You will be cured. You may be ill now, but in a little while you will be well again," he said, trying to instil into his voice a cheerful, optimistic tone, a suggestion of healing.

"In a little while," murmured Marx, with twisted lips.

"Why, yes, you must have patience. Would it comfort you to hear how many Wassermann reactions they get in the serological institute every week? Medicine——"

"Oh—you know you don't believe in medicine yourself," said Marx.

Rainer was silent.

"The only thing you have to worry about is how you can put things right with Friedel," he said after a moment, not knowing himself what to advise.

"With Friedel? But that's just the worst of the whole business! How can I ever look Friedel in the face again? I loathe myself. Imagine going to anyone as pure and innocent as Friedel—anyone so sweet, such a darling—darling," he said, and the bright tears welled in his eyes again. "No, it would be impossible to tell Friedel about such things. I must deal with that by myself. And I know what I must do, too."

"What?" asked Rainer.

"Something quite simple," whispered Marx.

Rainer turned towards him and tried to look him in

the eyes. But suddenly the little fellow turned round with a brusque movement and walked quickly away, straight ahead, without looking back.

Rainer lingered for a few moments in front of the window full of cheeses, depressed and not knowing what to do for the best, and then he too started on his way home.

When he entered his room, he found to his great surprise that his father was there. A surprise, of which the pleasure was not unmingled with fear. Young Rainer had written certain letters home and expressed certain intentions which might very well have scared the old man out of the peace of his little provincial town. And now there he sat, in an arm-chair of stamped plush in the middle of the room, looking at his son. He looked older, thinner and sterner than Rainer remembered him. There was something strangely excited in his expression. Rainer thought quickly of Helene and nerved himself. Be strong—carry it through, he thought; and his mouth, too, took on a hard look. Greetings, a handshake, a few questions exchanged across the intangible barrier separating father and son. Old Rainer was very like his son in many features. He had even more slender fingers than the latter, even narrower temples, even thinner lips. He wore a short grey beard and his eyes looked out through his spectacles with a strong, calm gaze—true doctor's eyes, thought young Rainer, fleetingly.

"How are things at home?" he asked, and leaned against his hired piano as though against a protecting friend.

Everything seemed to be all right at home. His twin sisters were growing up and were happy. One wanted to be a babies' nurse and the other had dreams of the technical high school. So far, neither of them had been

confirmed. The boy was getting on quite well in the upper second. And mother—ah, well!—mother was the same as usual—a little nervy—overwrought. . . .

Dr. Rainer finished his report with a little sigh which opened up vistas of unspoken domestic trials. Rainer the younger saw in rapid succession the migraine-racked face of his mother, darkened rooms, compresses; he heard the dreary, complaining voice; he smelt camomile vapours; he felt the slack, incapable hand which was always so cold when it tried to stroke you. O Helene! he thought at the same moment, and the contrast sent a thrill of joy to his heart. Dr. Rainer took out a cigar and lit it slowly, with a deliberation which concealed excitement. He also walked once across the room and then sat down again in the arm-chair. There was something of an effort in the movement which rather worried young Rainer and cast a depressing gloom over him.

"You wrote to me," said the father suddenly, bracing himself in a determined manner in which there was something almost painful. "You wrote to me."

"Yes, father."

"I cannot take your idea of giving up your studies and becoming a musician altogether seriously. All the same, I will talk it over with you," said Dr. Rainer, and this sentence sounded prepared and memorised.

"I am serious," said Rainer.

"I am regretfully forced to tell you that nothing can come of it. Your career has been mapped out, that you know. You are to become a doctor and, later on, to take over my practice. I cannot sanction any digression on your part. What I am saying sounds rather tyrannical, and I am sorry for that. I am not a tyrant at heart. But one has to be hard sometimes, when it is necessary. I, as well as you."

"If it is necessary, then I can be hard, father. And to

me music is a necessity. I am speaking of a spiritual necessity."

"And I am speaking of a material necessity; of a matter of extreme and immediate importance," Dr. Rainer replied quickly.

"I don't see that. A practice is not a kingdom. It isn't essential that I take it on. It isn't necessary for demands to be made of me as though I were the heir to a throne. Forgive me, father."

"Music!" said Dr. Rainer with a curt laugh, in which there was something which startled the boy, something bitter and envious, "Yes, music—that is a comfortable affair. With music one can indulge oneself, one can dream, can forget oneself, can let oneself go—isn't that so? Oh, I know what the attraction of music is, what a temptation to indulgence there is in it. A violin is a much more pleasant instrument than a scalpel, isn't it, my boy? No, don't say anything. I understand you only too well. A string quartette—by all means! I am no philistine, that you know. But music is a pleasure, not a career."

"I can't discuss music with you, father."

"Very well. It is not necessary. But I can discuss medicine with you. My boy—I cannot understand you. Could anything be more wonderful than our profession? I envy you every day and every hour all that you can see and do here. I—ah, well! perhaps I am in a bit of a rut now and must send my best cases to the hospitals. But to study—good God! All the material that pours in here, into this town! All the things that are taught, learned and discovered here! Do you read the medical journals regularly? Have you followed that new discovery of Professor Ortmann—Ortmann of Strasbourg? What—you haven't? Why, he has discovered a method of closing up fistulas of the parotid gland. He reported on it in the last issue but one. That's an important thing,

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that's an advance ! But I really believe that it does not interest you. Look at you, my boy, sitting there like that. Doesn't a thing like that excite you ? ”

“ A little perhaps. But only theoretically. I don't suppose that in actual practice I shall close many parotid fistulas. And even if I were to do a thousand, I should not consider that a satisfactory life's work.”

“ Not a life's work ! You are young, you are very young. You use such big words without any idea of their meaning. But a little jingle-jangle for pleasure, a little music : you would call that a life's work ? ”

“ Yes, most certainly.”

“ You are ungrateful. I am forced to call you that. We give you the chance to study, we make sacrifices. Yes, I must tell you—we have made great sacrifices so that you might study. There are thousands of talented young people who would give everything to be allowed to study.”

“ The point is that I am not talented,” said young Rainer quickly and obstinately.

“ Very well. But no one expected you to become another Billroth. I myself am only a mediocre doctor in a small town. And you will be one, too,” the father answered, after a little pause.

“ No, I shall not even be a mediocre doctor, father, that's certain. All my patients would die immediately.”

“ That's childish ! Die immediately ? Why, I should like to know ? ”

“ Oh, because—well, not only because I am clumsy. You know that my left-handedness has made me clumsy at everything, ever since I can remember. At a pinch, I can hold a slide, that's all. I shall never be a doctor, and you say yourself that in a country practice one must be able to do everything. I—well, I'm not altogether a fool at theoretical work, and in diagnosis I have a kind of

instinct, a sort of feeling in my finger-tips, but after all, that belongs more to the sphere of music than to medicine."

"Rubbish!"

"It is not rubbish, indeed it isn't. I am incapable of waging a hopeless war against death, because in my innermost soul, I am on far too good terms with it—too much in sympathy. I have a kind of forbidden superstition in me. I can sense which person belongs to life and which to death. I can feel the 'yes' or the 'no' in everyone, I always have been able to do so. I am what no doctor may be. I myself stand—on the dark side. That is why I belong to music. Music relieves; you were right when you said that. It is a magnificent negation of life."

"What a rigmarole! Do you mean to tell me that you pronounce your diagnosis of life and death by superstition? . . . Are you a swindler at a fair, a fortune-teller? . . . I thought I was dealing with a student of science, not with a childish dreamer."

"And I don't care a rap for science. I do not believe in science."

"You do not believe in science? My dear boy—you do not believe. . . . Very well. You will be forced, with or without belief—so much I am regretfully obliged to tell you."

"Then I must tell you that it is a grave responsibility to force anyone like me to be a doctor. If you do not feel that, as a father, you have a duty towards your son, surely you realise that as a doctor you have a duty towards the patients on whom you are going to let me loose. And, if you can produce no other reason than that I should take over your practice later on,——"

"Yes, I have another reason."

Up to this point the conversation, which had begun so

quietly and sensibly, had become more and more heated, until in the end the two Rainers were standing opposite each other with angry eyes and flushed cheeks. The elder had buried his fists in his pockets; the younger gesticulated emphatically and nervously with his left hand, now and then banging the lid of the piano, which resounded in muffled tones. It was the first quarrel of his life, and he experienced a sharp and thrilling pleasure in the retorts which he hurled at the father whom he feared and yet secretly loved. He was now thoroughly roused, and felt prepared to defend his point of view to the bitter end. It seemed to him that he had gained ground—he looked searchingly at his father, who had suddenly become silent. Dr. Rainer was hidden behind a thick cloud of smoke, which he had drawn from his cigar in sharp puffs. He looked weary, almost exhausted, and he sat down again in his chair and shrank into himself in a peculiar way.

Young Rainer looked at him. He was in some strange way startled and was also silent. In the silence could be heard the tinkling of distant music, perhaps some young people passing by, or a pleasure boat on the river.

"Come and sit beside me. We don't want to quarrel, Firilei," said Dr. Rainer, after a moment. He, too, made use of the nickname which Fritz Rainer had given himself in his first attempts to talk, and that touched Fritz deeply. His hands became still, he sat down on the piano stool, nearer to his father and tried to find his father's eyes behind the smoke and the spectacles.

"I have been talking to the Geheimrat," said Dr. Rainer after a pause, sitting straight up again—he had in the meantime shrunk into himself once more, with the same look of concealed pain on his face. "Yes, I was already here yesterday. I had one or two personal matters

to attend to, and I had a talk with the Geheimrat. He seems quite pleased with you."

"I have taken great pains recently. I have promised to pass the exam."

"Well, there you are. That's fine, my boy. You mustn't give me any more trouble over that. You must pass your exam and become a proper doctor. What if you are familiar with death? Good God! that's the very first thing you must be as a doctor. It can only help you. And as for your talent for diagnosis—which the Geheimrat confirmed—I would like to set you a small test from my own practice. Come, sit beside me, we will talk shop. I have always longed for this, even when you were little and used to ride horseback astride my knee. I will give you the history of the case, and you shall give me your opinion. And afterwards we shall understand each other better, I hope, and be the best of friends."

"This is going to be a real exam?" said Rainer, embarrassed and a little excited.

"Yes. Something of the sort. And the case is fairly straightforward. Now listen," the doctor began. He parted his hands as though they were mussel shells, and peered within them.

"Patient complains that for about a year his appetite has been growing steadily less. Nine months ago he began to lose weight—up to date has lost about twenty-two pounds, yes—about twenty-two pounds," said Dr. Rainer, contemplating his outstretched fingers. "Motions only every second day. There is often pressure in the epigastrium, especially after meals."

"Is there any nausea?" asked young Rainer, as the elder was silent.

"No nausea."

"Vomiting?"

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"No vomiting, nor any retching, but a constant feeling of fullness in the epigastrium."

Young Rainer thought for a while, summoned all his knowledge. By now he had real examination fever and he pronounced his diagnosis curtly.

"Cancer of the stomach."

Dr. Rainer, without removing his glance from his outstretched fingers, nodded his head imperceptibly.

"Would you consider the case operable, or is it too late," he asked.

"I would make an X-ray examination."

"Here is an X-ray negative," answered the doctor, and took a transparent envelope out of a cover and from this, with some deliberation, a darkly clouded strip—an X-ray film.

"I don't know enough about that, yet," said Rainer awkwardly, holding up the film with its shadowy forms against the light. Dr. Rainer bent his head closer and pointed with his long, yellow forefinger to the lighter parts of the dark shapes.

"Don't you understand, now? Now this, here, is a lesion in the stomach near the lesser curvature, about the size of the ball of the thumb, very indistinct. Here—about here, and in the centre. The pylorus seems to be free still, but the fundus is pushed slightly to the left."

"Yes, I see. Now I see it," said Rainer attentively.

The doctor, with his eyes firmly fixed on the negative, asked again: "After that, would you operate?"

Young Rainer began to smile.

"You see," he answered, "I, personally, would not think of operating. I would prescribe a great deal of morphia for the patient—a great deal of morphia—and I would let him die in peace. I would even, perhaps, in the course of conversation, let him know what dose one

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should take in order simply to go to sleep and be rid of the whole wretched business once and for all. But you or any proper doctor would probably operate and let the poor creature drag on for a few months longer."

"Yes. That is so. The operation shall be attempted. The result?"

"Fatal, sooner or later."

"How long do you give it?"

"It is a well-known fact that with cancer of the stomach, it is impossible to tell exactly," said Rainer, in the tone of voice in which he always answered the old Geheimrat.

Dr. Rainer held the X-ray film for a little while longer before his spectacles, then he dusted it with the back of his hand and packed it carefully in its covering.

"Well. It's a pretty gloomy prospect," he said afterwards, and the unprofessional expression astonished young Rainer and strangely disturbed him.

"Have I passed the exam?" he asked, trying to overcome a growing depression with cheerfulness.

"I think so. Your opinion agrees with what the Geheimrat told me—and with what I know of myself."

"Of yourself?"

"Yes. Of myself. You have diagnosed my own case," said Dr. Rainer, now sitting bolt upright in his chair.

Young Rainer stood up after a little while and crossed with dragging steps to the window. He had received a blow and there was a singing in his head.

"Are you going to show weakness?" asked Dr. Rainer quietly, with a gentle movement.

"No," said Rainer at the window.

His sight cleared. Across the way was a yellow shop sign. "Amalie Schmiedelfinger, Millinery," he read, without thinking. "Amalie Schmiedelfinger, Millinery"

—and his father was dying. They were much alike, they were attached to one another in a secret, bitter, speechless way—and now his father was dying.

“It’s cruel,” he murmured, without having the courage to look at his father.

“Yes, cruel it may be. We have got to get used to that. I in my way and you in yours. One struggles through, my boy, believe me, one struggles through. I am sorry,” he added more gently. “I am putting a heavy burden on you and you are no giant, that I know. It can’t be helped. Now I am going home. My train leaves in an hour. I shall put things in order a little at home, then I will come back and go under the knife. I have no great faith in it, nor has the Geheimrat. But at least it will be a postponement. That is why I am doing it. I am doing my duty. I am sticking to my post as long as I can. Meanwhile you must do your share. You must remember that from now on every day is infinitely precious. You must put yourself in my place, my boy, and just imagine how I regard time. You must work, grit your teeth and work. I will try and arrange for you to be in a position to finish your studies and do your two years’ voluntary work. Afterwards, you must take over the practice and support the family. You must educate the children and stand by your mother—which will not be easy. It isn’t easy for me, either. I could prescribe a small syringe for myself and spare myself all the drudgery and agony which is now beginning for me. For I know how much morphia is necessary, don’t I, Firilei?” he said, with a bitter smile. “The only reason why I am not doing so is that you shall receive the sum for which my life is insured. A joke, isn’t it? There is always something comic about commonplace heroism of that sort. But that is just what I must demand of myself and of you, too. Do you understand now that there



material necessities which are of greater importance than your spiritual weariness of life ? ”

“ Oh, father——”

“ Now you must not be weak. You must not shirk things. You must do the right thing.”

It is strange how quietly great catastrophes take their course. They pulled themselves together, the two Rainers. Each thrust his slender hands in his pockets. They did not embrace. They did not touch one another. They were encased in shells more fragile than glass, a single false move would have smashed to pieces what self-control, strength and will-power they possessed. They walked very upright side by side to the station. Even young Rainer carried himself erect and straight in an effort to show how strong he was. They spoke in brief and subdued phrases of immediate necessities and not until the train began to move off did old Rainer stretch his hand out of the window and say, almost in pity, “ Well, do your best, my boy. I’ll write to you when things get as far as that——” And young Rainer grasped this hand with a fervent pressure which expressed all the things he could not say, and answered with laboured correctness, “ I will wait for word from you and then I will arrange everything with the Geheimrat. *Auf Wiedersehen !* ”

And the train steamed off. There had been no more talk of music between them.

Rainer had scarcely left the station before his thoughts leapt to Helene. If help were to be found anywhere at that moment, then it would be found with her. She was strong, she would help carry the burden, she would comfort and encourage ; and with her one could weep, could let oneself go, lose oneself and throw off one’s rigorous self-control. He painted Helene’s picture in the air. She was wearing her copper frock and laughing

at him. "Come, my Firilei," she would say, "we will get over it somehow. You rely on me——"

Oh, he cried, to this Helene of his fancy, they are asking too much of me. I am not to be allowed my music, I have got to be a wretched doctor. I have got to support a family before I am three-and-twenty. I have a mother, who is ailing, who is weaker and of less use than I am myself; a young scamp of a brother and two small sisters who are complete strangers to me. I would willingly take my father's place and bear all his agony for him and die in his stead. That I could do. But I have got to take over his life, I have got to crawl into his life as though into a dry shell, a larva, and I have got to live like an old, responsible man with a beard and spectacles. I shall never be able to do what is demanded of me. I shall not be able to stand it—Helene——"

"Yes, you will be able to stand it. I am here," came the answer of that imaginary Helene, dancing, copper-red, before his eyes, and she raised her arms and even laughed in the midst of that black gloom.

Rainer walked faster and faster, until he was running, and when he arrived before the house where she lived, he was breathless, but full of confidence and hope.

But Grasmücke's worthy widow, who looked out of the window, announced that Fräulein Willfüer had gone away—gone without leaving any address and for an unknown reason.

And what is to become of you now, Helene Willfüer, student of chemistry? What is going to happen, what can you do in your impossible position—you, so eager, so full of life and vigour? Your life has been hard enough already, Heaven knows, and you have pursued it quietly and with courage. But what are you to do now, driven from the familiar and ordered sphere of chemistry

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into dark, untrodden terrifying ways, faced with happenings before which you stand ignorant and helpless, with less knowledge than the widow Grasmücke? You let go of the rudder and let the boat drift, that was the trouble, Helene Willfüer. You lost control of yourself—more out of kindness to another than through passion, it is true—and now you are plunging into the abyss. You are still working at your thesis, you do not let your hands remain idle, you do not let your head droop in misery. But now the fact that Azidosuccinic acid forms a yellowish, highly explosive oil loses much of its significance—and you sit in the laboratory, your hands resting in your lap, listening to yourself and thinking of the extraordinary chemico-biological changes taking place within you, which fill you with nausea, with a vague disgust.

One thing is absolutely certain. There must be no child. Admittedly, you are responsible to none but yourself, you enjoy every freedom and you are hampered by none of the narrow-mindedness of former days. Admittedly, there is no longer the same moral objection to the unmarried mother; but one cannot be burdened with a child whilst one is studying chemistry and working for one's degree. It is wildly impossible for a child to be born in Fräulein Willfüer's surroundings. Fancy the idea of introducing a perambulator into one's "digs," when two dissertations are awaiting completion. Impossible from every point of view, human and material, from the point of view of one's colleagues, one's work, and of the conduct and deportment expected of a girl student.

And since, from the first dreadful moment of suspicion, Fräulein Willfüer simply could not entertain the idea, could not even acknowledge its existence, she took certain necessary steps—in fear and trembling, for now her way lay no longer clear ahead of her, but led through dark,

muddy, menacing bypaths. Needless to say, Fräulein Willfüer, being the creature that she was, gave not the slightest indication to young Rainer of her fears and troubles—and indeed, of what help could poor, awkward, Firilei have been, who was himself in such need of help?

It was to Herr Rauner that Fräulein Willfüer first entrusted herself, "Doctor" Rauner, as his *clientèle* mis-called him—he who had helped the milkwoman. Herr Rauner, to put it briefly, was a student who had gone wrong, a degenerate and hopelessly outcaste character of the most questionable sort. He had once studied medicine. He had had a great reputation in the students' union, to which face-scars and rapiers and photographic groups with beer mugs testified. His head, on which were bald, mangy patches, had a worn-out look. There was dandruff in his greasy hair, and the palms of his hands seemed to shed those dry, grey flakes which are symptomatic of a general decay of the epidermis. His repellent knotted fingers trembled, for he drank, he was, in fact, a soaker, and for the past year he had been in the habit of indulging in the mild sensations of ether intoxication.

This then was Dr. Rauner, to whom Fräulein Willfüer first entrusted herself.

We will not linger over the details of the consultation. We will not talk of the disgust, of the deep shame, of the glib and fluent tricks of speech of the quack, of his feeling fingers, his breath, his request that one should remove one's clothing. . . . We will content ourselves with relating that Fräulein Willfüer fled, with nothing accomplished, because, apart from all the other revolting circumstances, Herr Rauner permitted himself to press upon her attentions, caresses, of the most disgusting nature. Yes, she fled; she pulled herself together and lashed away, breathing deeply as though she had escaped

from hell itself : but henceforth until the end of her days, Herr Rauner will haunt her in nightmares, approaching her with knotted fingers and bleary eyes. And, in addition, she had paid in advance a fee for medical examination of twenty marks ; twenty marks, a small fortune, a month's rent at the very least.

What next ? The days passed so quickly, she felt like a hunted beast ; the nights were sleepless, full of fear and unrest ; the darkness filled with menacing figures. Helene bought herself a candle, stuck it into an old vinegar bottle and lit it when things became too unbearable. Gulrapp, in her crooked bed, complained murmuringly, peering at her companion through closed eyelids. Fräulein Willfür, purely as a distraction and for a relief, wrote out new formulas over her bed— $N_2NA-Bp.CH.CO,C,H_2$ —and rubbed them out again. But her work did not progress during those weeks.

Then one evening at May Kolding's she heard accidentally during the course of conversation the name of Professor Riemenschneider of Frankfurt, mentioned as that of a doctor of great sympathy, from whom "one could get anything."

Helene Willfür visited the Bank. She possessed altogether 1,500 marks betwixt life and death. She withdrew 400 marks—at which her eyelids quivered with excitement—packed up a few clothes in her bag and went off without any detailed explanations, accompanied by the veiled good wishes of the sympathetic Grasmücke. It was raining in Frankfurt. The weather was unusually dreadful, and as Helene Willfür sat in Professor Riemenschneider's waiting-room, she felt cold and her coat steamed with dampness. It was very different at Riemenschneider's from what it had been at Rauner's. This small private gynecological clinic was all white ; white tiles, white paint, white furniture, white nurses.

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The Professor himself appeared in a white overall and conducted her through padded double doors, exhibiting above his white-pointed beard the experienced, sympathetic face of the woman's doctor. Helene Willfüer breathed more freely in this atmosphere of cleanliness and clinical correctness. She had not yet unburdened herself of her fears and her desires, had not yet dared to express her furtive and forbidden wish. Heaven only knew whether Professor Riemenschneider would wish to understand her. . . .

"No, there is nothing wrong in the direction that you seem to fear," said the Professor, on the completion of his examination. "The irregularities that you complain of arise from a different cause. I would recommend a slight operative treatment and then all would be well again. You would just come to my nursing home for a few days, five or six days, a mere trifle——"

A mere trifle, of course ; a ridiculously small affair, the simplest matter, really nothing at all. For a few seconds Helene believed the doctor's fairy story, was deceived by his smooth and vague way of calling things by other names.

"I see—is it really necessary then for anything to be done?" she asked, awkwardly and innocently.

The Professor smiled to himself behind his pointed beard.

"Oh, yes," he said. "Yes. It is necessary if we are to help you. In fact it is essential."

"And then everything will be in order?" breathed Helene Willfüer, relieved. "Only—forgive my asking—the fee, Herr Professor?"

The Professor, who was washing his hands, threw one rubber glove into the steriliser and casually stated that the operation fee would be 1,000 marks, to which must be added the slight expenses of the sojourn in the nursing

home and the medicines. These details were embarrassing for him, his indifferent and casual tone seemed to imply.

A thousand marks. Well—a thousand marks and then all would be well. Quite simple. The simplest matter. A slight operation. One thousand marks. A thousand marks did not seem to mean much to Professor Riemen-schneider. To Fräulein Willfüer, on the other hand, it represented nearly all she possessed. It was the basis of her existence, her studies, her whole life. A thousand marks. She had to exist for almost another year before taking her degree. The investigation on mono-azido-succinic acid would occupy her whole time up to the triumphant end. Then there were the lecture fees, examination fees, books, materials, the expenses of the dissertation. A matter of a thousand marks. This was a chasm not to be bridged by Fräulein Willfüer. On the further side there lay—a dazzling vision—someone in a white hospital bed, someone whom a “slight operative treatment” had rescued. On this side she herself sat, beaten, shattered, clenching her imploring hands.

“I am not very well off, Herr Professor,” she whispered, chokingly.

The Professor ran a calculating eye over her appearance—taking in everything from her well-bred head to her shoes, which had been ruined by acids. He noted her work-worn hands, the much-laundered white blouse, the blue skirt with red acid stains that had been fairly well recoloured by judicious treatment with ammonia. He noted all this with faint compassion and said casually :

“I could, in the circumstances, reduce my own personal fee ; but the total cost, including the clinical treatment, would still amount to a thousand marks.”

Fräulein Willfüer remained seated for a little longer. Her knees would not allow her to do anything else for

the moment. Then she gave herself a push and got up. A thousand marks, a thousand marks, a thousand marks.

"That is—then I can't allow myself—I haven't got as much as that, unfortunately," she whispered with strained lips, whose dryness was one of the symptoms of her unhappy condition.

Shrugged shoulders, a bow, green double doors. . . .

"I can only advise you, with your illness, not to take risks, not to entrust yourself to less reputable hands. Perhaps you will think it over again quietly," said the Professor at the last moment.

Fräulein Willfüer pulled on her gloves. The white nurse in the ante-room produced a small slip. Professional fee for examination: thirty marks. Not very much for anyone of Professor Riemenschneider's standing, thought Fräulein Willfüer. Her heart was aching, not only in the figurative sense, but also in the full physical sense. . . .

Rain; wet; grey, sooty clouds above; grey asphalt below. She wandered up and down through the gardens, without a goal, without consolation, without direction, with no definite plan, constantly up and down in a teeming, jostling confusion of troubles and thoughts. She was consumed with a ravenous hunger, a greedy, pathological, torturing hunger. She bought a roll; threw it away as unappetising; bought a few early pears; ate them greedily sitting in the rain on a wet, green seat. Nausea, tears, choked-back tears that gathered in her throat instead of in her eyes. Soaked to the skin, she entered a café, ordered a ham sandwich and asked for a street directory. She turned up the list of doctors, looking for a woman, a woman doctor, someone to whom she could entrust herself, to whom she could pour out her fears. Frau Dr. Gropius, for instance. . . . Gropius was a good, trustworthy sort of name; it



smacked of generations of good education. As Frau Gropius' consulting hours did not begin until three o'clock, Helene was able to fill in the time by walking the considerable distance to her house. She arrived at a little villa, a housemaid pressed a numbered metal disc into her hand; the waiting-room was already full of women, sitting against the walls, poring over newspapers, staring out of the window. It was still raining. A damp air arose from their clothes, and their faces looked yellow in the gloomy afternoon light. A cloud of dumb and resigned female patience lay over the room. At first each woman kept to herself. Then there were whispered questions and stories. Chairs were drawn closer and opinions and experiences exchanged. Helene Willfüer learned more in that waiting-room than in many a lecture on chemistry. Women, women of all ages, all classes, were crowded together there and talked of their own speciality—suffering. Suffering of every sort was represented there, from the complaints of anæmic girls to the torments of the ageing woman troubled by a malignant growth. A childless woman sat beside another whose physique was being impaired by too many child-births. The troubles of adolescence met here with the troubles of the climacteric. Young girls were there, with faces betraying their concealed anxiety, like Helene herself; and tired women, poor in blood, unfit for child-bearing. And a queen among them, beaming, happy and unshapely, was a young working woman heavy with child, very near to her first confinement, of which she spoke delightedly, as of a great event.

All of us sisters, thought Helene Willfüer, realising in a sudden flood of feeling that she belonged to them—and it seemed almost as though the relief of tears might soon come to her. But she fled from this weakening to the severe realms of chemistry. She thought of something

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fascinating, of the colourless tablet, it may be, that she had been able to prepare in her last experiment through the addition of aluminium grit, which had carried her so much further in her work. . . .

And Frau Doktor Gropius was also a sister—a broad, resolute, friendly woman, who informed herself of the facts of the case in a few words and immediately proceeded with her examination. Fräulein Willfüer knew the routine by now. . . .

“Sit down,” said the resolute Frau Doktor Gropius afterwards. “We will discuss the case. Pregnancy is evident. I surmise the beginning of the third month. You are unmarried? Well then, you’ll just have to get married.”

“That is impossible,” said Helene quietly.

“Impossible? Come, come. If your friend is responsible for starting this business then he must marry you. That is possible, believe me, that is quite possible.”

“No, it is not,” said Helene obstinately. Marry Firilei? Ridiculous idea!

“Why not, indeed?” asked the energetic woman doctor, filling up a case sheet.

“He—is married already,” lied Helene suddenly to her own astonishment. Unknown to her, in some strange, subconscious way, Ambrosius had taken Firilei’s place in her imagination. . . .

“A pretty business! Things like that ought not to be allowed. You seem to be a respectable person otherwise. What is your occupation?”

“Typist,” lied Helene readily. In addition to this, she had adopted the alias of Schmidt in all these consultations.

“Typist! Well, this is an unpleasant mess that you’ve got yourself into. But now you’ll just have to make the best of it. Is your friend at least supporting you?”

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"No, I support myself."

"Self-supporting. All right. You do not seem to be very well off."

"No."

"H'm. But you are on a panel naturally? Then you'll just go into a lying-in home when things get as far as that. You will not have any expenses, and they will advise you later on about the child. Thank heaven, in these last years we have got people to agree to unmarried mothers retaining their social rights. You know, too, that you are allowed to call yourself 'Frau'? Well, don't lose your head. Shall I tell you how many illegitimate children are brought into the world each year, according to statistics? And they all thrive, believe me. It's not nearly such a tragedy as you seem to imagine."

"Are there any statistics," said Helene softly, summoning all her courage, "are there any statistics, Frau Doktor, of the number of children who are not born?"

A queer question from a typist, thought the doctor, looking more closely at her patient.

"No," she said. "But I admit that they would amount to a very large number. But let us stick to statistics, Frau Schmidt," (she said Frau Schmidt and Helene winced at the strangeness) "shall I tell you how many mothers come to grief through trying to rid themselves of their children? And the way in which they come to grief, Frau Schmidt, the dreadful way?"

"That is why I came to you," answered Helene softly.

"So that's why, is it? That is the reason. You all come along and expect Frau Gropius to help. No, in that case you have not come to the right address, Frau Schmidt. In my opinion it is immoral. Don't misunderstand me. I think it is immoral to shirk a responsibility in that way. One must not take the easiest course. That is my opinion. It is through the hard knocks of

life that one grows and becomes strong. I am a woman, just as you are. I know what I am talking about."

"Frau Doktor," said Helene, very softly, but quite firmly, her mind made up. "I cannot have a child. It is impossible for me. I have lied to you. I am studying. I am a student, a student without any means, if you know what that is. I am in the midst of my work for my degree. I haven't a soul in the world to whom I can turn. I haven't the time, nor the money, nor the remotest chance of bringing a child into the world, of supporting it or bringing it up. I am twenty-one. I have fought my way up to now under very great, very, very great difficulties, and by means of great sacrifices. I cannot interrupt my studies. But I cannot attend lectures or practical work in this—condition. That you know. I appeal to your feelings as a student, to your understanding."

She lifted her clasped hands with a little gesture towards the broad woman in the doctor's coat, and then let them fall on the writing-table beside her. She was conscious of nothing further. It became quiet. In the silence a small gas flame sighed and boiling water hummed in a nickel container.

"You poor thing, you poor thing," said the doctor, and laid her strong hands with their short nails over Helene's fingers, which trembled under the pressure. "It is always the same cry, every day the same cry. With you it is from this cause, and with others from another. I cannot help. I dare not help. I have to send wretched women away who have had five, six, seven children and are distracted from misery. I—if only I could have my way! Among the welfare regulations there would long ago have been one by which the blessing of children might be regulated officially. But we're a long way from that yet. And we have our ominous laws. You are studying. I, too, have studied. Yes, I

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know only too well how difficult it is. Do you really expect me to run the risk of imprisonment, to stake my whole existence? I can't do it, Frau Schmidt, I cannot and I dare not. And I can only warn you with all my might against entrusting yourself to quacks. I see far too much misery of that sort every day. Change your mind on that point. Just remember that within you a human being is growing who may possibly bring you great happiness one day. A genius, perhaps; a poet, a discoverer, someone great. The possibility that is growing within you must not be frustrated. You must not be afraid, you must hope, Frau Schmidt."

"Yes," said Helene, getting up. How much did she owe, she asked with parched lips. She had understood nothing but the refusal.

Nothing. Absolutely nothing. If she would like to put a penny in the collecting-box for orphans——

Fräulein Willfüer dragged herself away through the waiting-room. They had already turned on the lights. She dragged her heavy, weary body down the steps like a sack. Rain. Wet. Blasts of wind round unfamiliar corners. Tram-cars, squares, houses, everything distorted and hopeless. And what now? Go home? Back to her digs? Back to Frau Grasmücke's searching eyes and Gulrapp's secretly prying glances? Back to Firilei and to playing the comedy of a serene Helene, conscious of the goal she was aiming at? Oh, no! That was not possible. That was securely locked away behind high barricades.

Fräulein Willfüer stumbled into a cinema. She sat there for three hours in her wet clothes and experienced a slight diversion, a brief sense of well-being in the midst of her helpless perplexity. The film was about India. The pictures were luxurious and for the moment there was so much excitement on the screen that it was possible

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to forget herself. Then came the end of the performance. Outside it was still raining. She was hungry. A café and another ham sandwich. Fräulein Willfüer, hidden behind a pillar, studied advertisements, those ambiguous back-page advertisements which promise advice and help, even in difficult cases. Her case seemed to belong to the difficult ones. . . .

She drank a glass of liqueur. She counted her money with anxious eyes. She had already spent fifty marks, and had achieved nothing. In a sudden access of moral weakness, she ordered two eggs and ate them. She sat so long behind her pillar that here, too, the orchestra played the final march. She went to the station, fetched her little case which she had left there, and found a small, cheap hotel in the neighbourhood. By now she was not far from fainting. She only wanted to sleep. Her craving for sleep superseded all else. In a stuffy room, she threw herself fully dressed on to a stuffy bed and fell asleep almost instantaneously, freezing with cold and shaken by little shudders in her bad dreams.

Next morning it was still raining. Helene did some exercises, washed all over in cold water, and tried to replenish her reserve of strength as much as possible. She took the addresses from the advertisement page of the paper and began her wanderings. Frau Winter, midwife, was not at home. She had gone to a confinement on a country estate. Fräulein Morholm, who was the next she visited, was a creature of Helene's own stamp; a young woman of good family, cultured, friendly and of a pleasant restfulness. With her Helene had a long talk. No, she did not concern herself with such things either. She produced similar arguments to those of Frau Doktor Gropius. One had too hard a fight for one's livelihood as it was, one could not endanger or undermine it with illegal practices. Conditions were such nowadays that

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help in matters of this sort could only be expected from quacks and doubtful practitioners. A ridiculous law, ridiculous conditions. But keep your courage up. *Auf Wiedersehen!*

On and on. Frau Friedrichs, retired midwife, as the doorplate discreetly announced, lived far out of the town at Mauerstrasse 15. A thin woman in an untidy kitchen apron opened the door and bowed Helene into a room. It was hot and close inside. They seemed to be cooking cabbage. Dreadful knick-knacks on a what-not, two tattered periodicals, thick curtains. At the windows two glass plaques, the trumpeter of Säkkingen and Heidelberg castle. Helene stared at them, quite devoid of thought. Frau Friedrichs, the retired midwife, (and why "retired" ?), reappeared. She had changed her kitchen apron for an operation coat which might perhaps have impressed servant girls seeking assistance. Everything ran on oiled wheels now, the same questions, the same lies. Fräulein Willfür lay down on a sofa similar to that of Herr Rauner. Fräulein Willfür was examined yet again. . . .

Yes, Frau Friedrichs promised a remedy. Frau Friedrichs was good nature personified. She could not bear to see the misery which such young ladies had to suffer. She twaddled some nonsense about seduction and inexperience and young blood which produced in Helene a slight feeling of nausea. Nevertheless, she had at last achieved something. Fräulein Willfür—or rather Fräulein Schmidt, as she was called here—now paid out a hundred marks and then moved into a room in the midwife's house. And next morning the small operation was to take place.

Helene, left alone, sat down on the edge of her bed and tried to think things over.

It was curious that in the uncanny strangeness of that

room she should think first of her dead father. She saw him with vivid distinctness. He was almost alive as he stood beside her. He was peeling an apple and he offered her the larger half with a rare and tender fatherly kindness. The air in the room was bad. Helene tried to open the window, which for some unknown reason refused to move. The bed was small, the bed-linen freshly washed and still rather damp. On the wall behind hung a piece of material on which a green lion was tearing a red calf to pieces. The wall-paper was hideous. On the minute wash-stand there was some chipped toilet ware. In its way this room too constituted "digs" of a sort, but of a depressingly ugly commonness; "digs" to which only disaster could lead.

The smell of greens percolated through the walls. Outside somebody slopped by in slippers; a dog barked shrilly and angrily; a door slammed. Strange, everything was as strange as in a dream. Grit your teeth, thought Helene. In two days all will be over.

She thought of Gulrapp. She felt a great homesickness for Gulrapp, and for her own digs, for the laboratory, even for Plain Meier. But Firilei—curiously, she had almost forgotten Firilei.

The worst part of this room were its walls. They let everything through, odours, the smell of humanity, voices. And also something uncanny, something frightening and gruesome. They let through a gentle moaning. There was no doubt about it. Somewhere behind doors someone was moaning gently, complaining quietly, so patiently, so obediently, without crying out, without strength. Behind walls someone was being tormented, martyred. Something was happening there while Helene sat on her bed, clinging with her fingers to the edge of it. How lonely she felt, there in that room with the rain drumming down aslant on the barred


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window and that shuddering fear creeping through the walls. . . .

Frau Friedrichs appeared and set down a greenish substitute for coffee—for board was reckoned extra. She had an exhausted air, this retired midwife, but she tried nevertheless to impart an air of peace and confidence.

"What on earth is the matter there?" asked Helene, motioning with her chin in the direction of the groaning wall.

"There? The matter? Nothing. Only the usual."

"Is someone having a baby?" asked Helene Willfüer. She seemed to have become a complete stranger to herself, as she sat there as though shattered by a storm, in front of the red and green hanging.

Frau Friedrichs opened her eyes.

"She is not having an easy time," was all she said. "With you it will be quite different. You are young and healthy."

She slopped away in her slippers. A sound of doors. Whispering. Moans, moans, such soft, weak, whining moans that Helene began to imagine that she could see the continual loss of blood. It seemed to stream over the boards, over the corridor, over the threshold. . . .

Helene breathed deeply and fought down a feeling of sickness. I can't stand this, she thought. It was already getting twilight. She stood up and went on tiptoe to the door, into the corridor. It was pitch dark outside. The odours of the house hung thickly in the darkness. The moaning became more distinct. A door on the opposite side opened. Frau Friedrichs appeared.

"What are you doing here? What are you standing there for, listening like that?" she asked loudly, harshly, as though startled. "Are you looking for something?"

"I must go back to the station to fetch my case," said Fräulein Willfüer, frightened and depressed.

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"But you must be back again before eight o'clock, Fräulein Schmidt, for the outer door is locked at that hour. I must be orderly here. I can't afford to attract any attention late at night."

"Is that going on much longer?" asked Helene in a whisper, pointing towards the groaning behind the door.

"Good heavens, Fräulein, what a state of nerves you are in! Sometimes their screams are of a very different sort," said Frau Friedrichs in a strong Frankfurt dialect.

Helene crept away.

Still the same regular, hopeless, persistent rain in the approaching evening. Helene took a tram, a tram whose life and brightness seemed quite unreal after those strange, fleeting, gruesome hours. She paid her hotel bill and fetched her case. She counted her money over again, and the result was alarming enough. A hundred marks had been paid to Frau Friedrichs in advance, and she was to receive the same sum on the completion of the treatment. Helene, weary and almost reckless, slipping fast downhill, indifferent to everything except just the one thing, took a cab for her return journey. It was not yet eight. The outer door of the house was still open. A greengrocer was just closing his shop. The name of the proprietor was George Viereck. Helene noticed this and she remembered it all her life. In the courtyard there was a murmuring of local housewives. A car was standing at the door which seemed strange enough in this miserable poverty-stricken alley. The walls of the staircase exuded gloom. Through the cracks of doors there was a watching and whispering. All round Helene there seemed to be hidden eyes and ears. She was overcome with a great fear. Suddenly and for the first time, she realised the criminality of her intentions. Was the moaning still going on? she wondered, and hesitated on the last few steps

A porcelain plate: Frau Friedrichs, retired midwife

The wailing sound of the bell. A light was now burning in the hall. A man, whom Helene had not seen before, opened the door.

"What do you want?" he asked, looking her up and down.

"I want to see Frau Friedrichs."

"Are you under treatment by Frau Friedrichs?" he asked, looking at Helene's weary but upright figure, her gloves, her case.

"No, not yet," said Helene, not knowing what to reply.

"Then I can only advise you to go away again at once. I am a doctor—Dr. Hartmann is my name. Something unpleasant has happened here. The police will arrive shortly. I don't think it is necessary for anyone else to be mixed up in the affair. Have you left any of your belongings in the apartment?"

"No——"

"Then that's all right. Thank your stars and me that you have got away from here with a whole skin. Good night."

The door closed. Friedrichs, retired midwife. Steps, worn, wooden steps; a smell of cabbage; inquisitive eyes through the cracks of doors. The street. Fresh air. George Viereck, greengrocer. A street lamp at the corner. A tram-car. Light, people, straight, respectable, clean people. . . .

For a second Helene felt as though she were going to faint. Then she picked up her case and fled from the neighbourhood of the alley.

The catastrophe which Professor Ambrosius had felt in his bones and had feared for so long happened at last. It happened on the same rainy day that Fräulein Willfürer was trudging about Frankfurt on her dark and dangerous

errand. There was, however, no earthquake, nor did any gasometer blow up, nor did even the laboratory explode. All that happened was that a letter written on expensive dove-grey note-paper was delivered at the Villa Ambrosius.

"Dear Val," thus wrote the Pastouri—"I promised to be quite frank with you, and the time has come for things to be cleared up between us. That our marriage was a mistake you, too, will have perceived. I beg you to make an end of this mistake and institute divorce proceedings. I left your house this morning because I did not want you to play the rôle of the betrayed husband. To this day I have never been your property, but now I belong to someone else, and with that everything is finished between us. I would like to avoid the expression 'love' for the feelings which have taken me away from you and drawn me elsewhere. For in my life with you, I have become distrustful of what is usually called love. I am a woman—*très femme* they called me in Paris—and I must follow the mysterious commands and dictates of my senses. And when I am playing the violin I need a partner with whom I am in harmony, so that we may be in unison. But enough of that. Thank you, and good luck! I am going away. May Kolding will let me know of your future movements. It makes me sad that I must hurt you, but you are so strong and you have your work. I will remain your friend, and perhaps one day, later on, you will be able to be my friend. Adieu until then.—Yvonne."

When Ambrosius had read, re-read and grasped this letter—which happened in his conservatory—his first action was to seize the nearest thing to his hand, the great earthenware pot in which the largest palm grew, lift it in the air and smash it to smithereens on the floor. He was a passionate, headstrong creature, this Ambrosius. It

would have been so much easier for him to smash his coffee-cup, but no, he must choose the largest and heaviest thing he could find to destroy. He stormed and raged in his distress like a wild animal that has been placed in captivity. He cried aloud, hoarse and inarticulate cries which the servants in the basement heard in fear and trembling.

He crammed his fists into his mouth, he bit his hands savagely, he raged through the house, tore to pieces the music that was lying on the piano, burst into his wife's bedroom, kicked the bed, wrenched dresses out of the wardrobes, plunged his fist through the wardrobe mirror and stood there, wounded and covered with sweat, with blood streaming over his hand. He was waging a battle. He was ridding himself violently of an invisible opponent. When he left the house, it looked like a battlefield; with a ravaged face and desolated heart he rushed away from it. He was still wearing his black coat, for he had come straight from college. The housemaid ventured to follow him into the garden with a raincoat, which he threw over his shoulders, too impatient to put it on properly. He stormed, bareheaded, through the rain down to the town and arrived at May Kolding's as though he had been hurled there by an explosion—distraught, broken, shattered, every shred of dignity gone.

Fräulein Kolding, who was now working quite seriously on her dissertation on Balzac, was frightened by him; but she was too clever to show it.

"Where is my wife?" thundered Ambrosius. "Your brother has run away with her! I hold you responsible for this. Your brother is a cur, a scoundrel, a fop, a dressed-up doll in white flannels. I will kill him. I will shoot him dead."

May Kolding waited with a little sarcastic smile.

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Just let him wear himself out, she thought ; keep calm, don't show any fear. His bark is worse than his bite. And, in fact, Ambrosius' excitement did ebb before her cool expression, died down, dwindled into a shame-faced shyness. And immediately May Kolding was friendly, understanding and helpful.

She was quite prepared to send messages ; but she was not able to give any information. She had no personal feeling in the matter. She took no sides. Her brother, moreover, was not much to her taste. She found this Ambrosius, this famous, wayward, great baby much more attractive. She stretched out her pretty, *soignée*, claw of a hand and stroked him a little. He was so touched by this trivial attention that his breath caught. This made him furious. He disappeared, the doors thundered behind him, the stairs shook as he ran down them.

Below, cold rain splashed in his face, and unconsciously this did him good. On a sudden impulse, he rushed to the station. He did not take a taxi, which would have been the sensible thing to do, but he ran, breathlessly and almost choking for life, driven by an urge to keep moving. He did not want to think ; he must act. Shaking heads followed his familiar figure in its distraught progress.

The fast train to Frankfurt had gone. There was a slow train in twenty minutes' time. Ambrosius, his throat parched with excitement, consumed with a tormenting thirst, gulped down a glass of wine at the buffet, and paced up and down the platform, looking like a tiger behind the bars of its cage. At last the train came. At last came the departure signal. Ambrosius sat in a compartment licking his hand, on which the recent cuts kept opening and oozing forth blood. A hellish journey, endlessly, endlessly, endlessly jolting along between the constant halts. Rain, telegraph wires, the red cap of a

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railway official. They were continually stopping, and every time the same cap bobbed along the train. On the window panes the raindrops flowed into one another in a chaotic, ridiculous way. A simile floated through Ambrosius' mind, but he could not pin it down. A map of Baden and Württemberg, a black muddle, no sense in it. Regulations. Prohibitions. It is dangerous to lean out of the windows. Do not spit. Do not open. Penalty for improper use of the communication cord. . . .

Ambrosius, still waging his battle with the invisible, rebelled. He flung open the window, leant well out, unbolted the door. It would have wanted very little to make him pull the communication cord, out of sheer opposition, just so that something should happen on that endless journey. Once during the war he had been transported from the western front to the Carpathians and even that journey had not seemed so long. And to make matters worse, he had not got his watch; he had left it lying on the table in his room at home. Nevertheless, even this dawdling train did eventually arrive at Frankfurt, and perhaps the leisurely course of his journey may have calmed and quietened Professor Ambrosius. For the fact remains that Ambrosius' further actions were not entirely devoid of reason or common sense.

He went to a telephone call-box, looked up Bank Director Dr. Kolding—he ground his teeth as he did so and breathed in laboured choking gasps—rang up and, in a rough, hoarse voice asked his questions.

“Doctor Kolding at home?”

“No, I'm sorry he isn't,” replied the thin voice of a servant-girl over the wire.

“When will he be back?”

“I'm afraid I don't know.”

“Is he in Frankfurt, or has he gone away?”

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"I think he is in Frankfurt."

Professor Ambrosius stood for a few moments longer with his mouth to the instrument wanting to ask something further. Was a lady visiting Herr Kolding? was what he wanted to say. But he did not say it. He was unable to force the question out; it stuck in his throat.

"Have you finished?" asked the operator.

"No."

Ambrosius thought for a moment, made a mental note of the address and left the call-box.

In front of the station he hesitated. He was uncertain what he should do next. He was guided by nothing but the sensation in his fists, in his jaws, the purely animal sensation of longing for a fight. He bowed his powerful head and went on his way. He caught sight of himself in a mirror as he approached, and at first he did not recognise himself. Then he stood still. He had once seen an animal at a bull-fight advance in the same way, just as massively, with just such broad shoulders, such lowering, threatening heaviness, and just such a battering-ram of an outstretched head—the resemblance frightened him.

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A few doors further along there was something else that detained him. He lingered in front of a gunsmith's that chance seemed to have placed there, all ready and waiting for him. He had no plans, nor had he thought things out at all; he had only this repressed urge to fight, to arm himself, to destroy if necessary. He entered the shop, chose a business-like revolver, had it loaded, paid his bill—by a stroke of luck he found a note case in his improvised travelling clothes—and thrust the steel-grey weapon into his hip pocket.

He reached Doctor Kolding's little villa in the West End, and after fighting for composure rang the bell and conducted a short parley with the maid-servant. The



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maid was a nervous, hesitant creature with dark-ringed eyes. She stammered her little duty lies, and was swept off her feet by the violent personality of this hatless man in the raincoat. Now Ambrosius had an object. He was obliged to bury his shaking, clenched fists in the pockets of his coat, lest he should smash something else to pieces in that pretty, tidy little hall. When he had dragged from the helpless maid the address of the painter with whom it was possible that Dr. Kolding might be at that hour, he left the West End, consumed by a raging impatience.

This time he took a taxi. He urged the driver on with hoarse cries, straight through the town, over a bridge and on to the suburbs where the houses were less frequent. Mr. Harryman Samson had improvised a studio in a small, barrack-like house. A young, mild-faced manservant, wearing a white linen suit, opened the door. The master was working. But this servant was also swept aside by Ambrosius. A small, cheerful, untidy ante-room. What was it that re-echoed here, resounding like a hammer in the expectant stillness? It was, apparently, the beating of Ambrosius' own heart. "A gentleman to see you, sir," announced the manservant, opening a folding door.

This was the picture which presented itself to Ambrosius as he stood on the threshold fighting for breath.

He saw a large room lit by a bright, clear light from opaque window panes. The room was made to look still larger, and was broken up into endless perspectives in a fantastic way by mural paintings. The glowing tropical world of an imaginary Atlantis flourished luxuriantly in these painted depths; festoons of liana covered the ceiling; palms, unreal and yet startlingly real, bore large and flaming fruits; a seashore shimmered green and foaming; fabulous animals with long legs, red snouts and impossible plumage, marched past

on the friezes. Mixed with the painted and caricatured monkeys was a real one bounding about, and a parrot rocked back and forth on a ring, uttering strange, guttural sounds.

Mr. Samson, the owner and author of these surroundings, was standing before his easel, clad in light silk pyjamas; he rolled the whites of his insolent eyes in the direction of his visitor; laughed with a flash of his white teeth, his great, age-old laugh of the jungle, and with an inviting gesture indicated the back of the room. His nigger face conveyed everything at once; nature and decadence; naïve insolence and a satanic expectancy; amiability and pure derision. It was huge fun to keep this comic European dangling, was what this nigger face seemed to say.

At the back of the room, whither the dark hand with its light nails had pointed, were to be seen two figures that seemed rooted to the spot. One of these was Bank Director Dr. Kolding, in a dark blue suit, with brown shoes, a well-pomaded head, and blue shaved, powdered cheeks. His smooth, regular face with its mousey features betrayed both embarrassment and conceit. He was smoking a cigarette through a malachite holder. On a little table beside him stood liqueur bottles, one of which he had knocked over as he sprang to his feet, and its contents were dripping in thick, golden-yellow drops on to his shoes.

The other figure was Yvonne Pastouri.

Yvonne Pastouri was not naked, she was worse than naked, she was clothed in a shameless and provocative manner. She was wearing silk stockings, silk shoes and a draping of fluffy white tulle below her hips. The rest was naked. Hanging between her small breasts down to her lap was a string of dull black stones—that was all. Yvonne crouched on a black skin. The points of her breasts were

very red, painted perhaps. She spread one of her hands over them and looked with a half frightened, half sulky expression towards the open folding door in which the manservant stood in a respectful, waiting attitude.

The same Yvonne was to be seen over again on the easel, painted, only just sketched in, but already startlingly real, very white against the black, with very rosy shadows and very blue veins; very empty, very cold and completely shameless.

This was the comedy which was presented to Ambrosius; and, what is more, the dumb, rigid, marionette-like scene was accompanied by strident music which poured steadily and gaily forth from the brown funnel of a loud speaker.

It is difficult to describe what was going on inside Ambrosius at that moment, in that second of terrible clarity and revelation. A cosmic catastrophe, a collapse, an avalanche—his world crashed, that burning, vital, warm, sensual world of the impulsive character, and something shattered, something icy, remained. God knows what tormenting visions of love and jealousy had driven him there. He had been bound to Yvonne with a strong, forceful and manly passion. He had constantly imagined her naked, submissive, constantly imagined her in embraces, in the heat of passion, kisses, and ecstasy. But this was something quite different. This was cold, calculated, a little provocative play on the senses, a perverse confession of weakness and emptiness. It forced his mouth into an expression of contempt and bitter disillusion. The little monkey chattered, the parrot squawked, the loud speaker busily jingled its dance tunes.

"I am painting the portrait of Madame," said the painter, full of suppressed irony. "Does it interest you? Won't you sit down?"

Ambrosius, whose limbs had suddenly become limp,

walked through the room with uncertain steps and stood still in front of the Pastouri.

"Yvonne," he said in a husky voice, "I came here to shoot you and your lover. I see now that that would be ridiculous. I don't understand this. This is not in my line. I have loved you as a man should love a woman. I cannot offer you refinements. I see now what is the matter with you. You are incapable of love, utterly incapable. That is a great pity, Yvonne. This morning I smashed the big palm and shattered a mirror. But now I am completely indifferent. Now you can have a divorce as soon as you like. God help you, or the Devil take you! I know you now. You do not want love, you only want to play at love, just the feeble, half-hearted unhealthy sort. To-day you leave me in the lurch and run off with this pomaded fellow, this ape; to-morrow you will leave him and attach yourself to the nigger. And so it will go on. Keep it up, Yvonne! Your beautiful white skin which he has painted so prettily there will soon get dirty. Go on—keep it up."

There was no anger in his words now, only a sadness, a pity, mingled with scorn. The Pastouri bit her pretty, short upper lip and studied her nails. The black pearls on her chest clicked against one another with a tiny sound, as the radio music took breath for a moment.

"Does Herr Ambrosius see a likeness in the portrait?" asked the nigger diabolically, and added a little touch of red to the breasts of the painted Yvonne.

Bank Director Dr. Kolding was much less equal to the situation. He flushed and said: "I beg you, Herr Professor! Not in front of your wife——!"

Poor Kolding! He could not shake himself free of the conventional or grasp the irony of his words.

"I am not talking to you, you ape!" answered Ambrosius without even looking at him. He was now

standing in front of the easel with a brooding face. The loud speaker started to play again.

Dr. Kolding put his right foot forward in its liqueur-splashed yellow shoe, struck an attitude, and said curtly: "I am prepared to offer you satisfaction. That must suffice. I decline insults."

Ambrosius made no answer.

"Yvonne," he said, almost in amazement, "do you realise how strange it is? For the first time I see you to-day without feeling anything. I see you, pretty as you are, all tricked up to attract and seduce, and it leaves me quite cold. I am disenchanted, Yvonne, thoroughly disenchanted. For three years I have been bewitched by you; now it is all over. When I go away now, I shall be quite free and very wretched, very wretched. You can therefore write to Dr. Goldmann about the divorce. I will give him all details."

"Herr Professor," screamed Dr. Kolding, who imagined himself to have been made a fool of, "I will not be treated like a stupid boy. You are only a professor, I know. But if you do not want satisfaction of me then I demand it of you for the expressions which you have used. And I would draw your attention to the fact that this lady is under my protection. I forbid you to offend her. I forbid you once and for all! You have forced your way in here—you adopt an unheard-of attitude—I will take the matter to a court of honour if necessary——"

"You will do *what*?" asked Ambrosius quietly, and suddenly he saw red. He turned round and slowly approached the Bank Director. Again he had about him the lowering heaviness of an enraged bull. It was an effort for Kolding not to move out of the way, but he stood his ground and merely turned pale beneath the blueness of his shaven cheeks. "Thank your stars I don't

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"Smash your face in," said Ambrosius, still quietly. He raised his two fists, which shook with controlled strength, he raised them aloft and placed them quite gently on Doctor Kolding's shoulders. He forced those shoulders down, slowly and without any apparent effort. The veins on his temples became more prominent, but that was all. Silently and with distorted face, the Bank Director sank to his knees. The wireless played a one-step as an accompaniment to this scene. Mr. Samson seemed to be enchanted. "Good. Very good, this," he commented gutturally.

Ambrosius turned to him and said, "I would like to buy that picture: it is excellent. Very—enlightening. I would like to keep it as a memento. May I know the price?"

"Coward! You are a coward!" screamed Dr. Kolding suddenly. He was standing, ghastly pale in the background, dusting his knees. All his pent-up, childish, querulous anger escaped in that one word. Ambrosius, his hand in his side pocket, crossed the length of the room up to the wall on which the palms and dream-like coasts were painted. The little monkey chattered with fright: it was the first to see that the man was raising a revolver. The parrot fluttered, the Pastouri uttered a short, shrill scream. The wireless was now playing a shimmy. Ambrosius fired five shots in rapid succession. He shot five holes in the picture. Then his hand fell to his side.

"Excellent," said the nigger. "Good shoots. But picture unfortunately smashed."

"The price will be sent you," said Ambrosius and took his leave. He was very tired now. A great unnerving weakness came over him. He reached the folding doors like a drunken man trying to conceal his drunkenness. But outside, in the ante-room, the mild manservant

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had to spring to the assistance of the gentleman who had suddenly collapsed. The taxi drove away a man who felt as faint as though his veins had been opened and all his life-blood were draining from him.

One could not have said that Ambrosius was drunk when he entered his homeward-bound train that evening. True, he had poured a great quantity of red wine down his throat in the meantime, but he had remained sober, in a grim and empty way. Never in his whole life had he experienced this dull, creeping coldness and emptiness. He made a sorry picture as he entered a fairly full compartment and sank on to a seat. His hair was wet, for he had walked for hours bareheaded through the rain; his coat gleamed, dripping and steaming; his eyes were red-rimmed and sunk in deep hollows. Occasionally he rubbed these burning eyes with his wounded hand. A man clambered over the roofs of the carriages lighting the small, powerless gas lamps, beneath which everything had a drab look. The homeward journey began. With a dumb apprehension Ambrosius thought of his empty house, of the shocked servants, the murdered palm, the shattered mirror which would never more reflect Yvonne's likeness. . . .

"Good evening, Herr Professor," said somebody who was cowering huddled up in a corner.

"Good evening—oh, it's you, Fräulein Willfüer. I did not recognise you. The light is so bad."

"Yes."

"I believe it is raining," said Ambrosius a moment later, and this observation bore witness to the utter abstraction and confusion of his mind. At least Helene Willfüer, who had become sensitive and perceptive through her own experiences, noticed the professor's confusion and his broken, extinguished spirit. Ambrosius meanwhile made an effort to make conversation. In

an attempt to escape from himself, he clung to the first person whom chance had sent across his path.

"Have you been in Frankfurt, too? Are you also going home? Good! It seems to me—haven't we made this journey together once before? What have you been doing in Frankfurt? Enjoying yourself? Have you run away from your pyrazolon derivatives?" he asked, vacantly and hastily, in his urgent need of speech. His voice was hoarse and strange. He cleared his throat angrily.

"Tell me something. Tell me what you have been doing all day," he demanded, in the impatient tone of the examiner. "I have been through a terrible time," he added—it escaped him involuntarily. "Now I should like to know what other people have been doing, while I myself——"

He broke off, became distracted, and did not listen to Helene's answer. Then for a long time he said nothing. The conversation of two women who were discussing the price of eggs filled the compartment.

"How did I get into the fourth class?" asked Ambrosius resentfully, tapping the wooden bench on which he was sitting. Helene, plunged deep in her maze of troubles, was forced to smile. Ambrosius saw this smile. He observed it with a sudden attention, as though he had only just discovered it. It was a wonderful smile, fleeting, sad, secret and wise. Suddenly Helene Willfürer was beautiful.

"You have done your hair differently?" asked Ambrosius. "You look so changed. For a moment I didn't think it could be you. And so you have spent a happy day in Frankfurt? I seem to be talking a lot of rubbish," he said—for his phrases sounded to him as though they were spoken in fever. Helene looked at him and was silent. What have they done to you? she thought to herself.


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"You look tired," he said some time later. "You must take off your coat, for it is wet through. Has it been raining?"

For the second time he asked this question about the weather, though his own clothes and hair were dripping and steaming with moisture.

As Professor Ambrosius was helping Helene out of her coat, something occurred. One of those trifling things which have such far-reaching effects. It happened that his hands brushed her neck and that both of them, in that moment, experienced something which was almost worthy of the name of happiness. They were both plunged deep in trouble and despair; two human souls driven from their courses, hunted, tired, hopeless. The day had gone ill with them and they could not see their way before them. Each sat a prey to gloom and confusion, alone and completely absorbed in their own thoughts. Then this brief contact took place—just the warmth of a man's hand touching a girl's neck; just this momentary, light touching of one person by another—and all at once things seemed better, there was a sense of comfort, of relief, of peace. . . .

Ambrosius hung Helene's wet coat on a hook and then hung his own over it. And even this, the vicarious protection of this large raincoat, gave her so sharp a thrill of forbidden pleasure, so strange and so strong that she was deeply moved and roused from her misery.

After this they sat silent, smiling to themselves unconsciously, as drugged people smile just before the anæsthetic loses its hold. The train stopped, went on; stopped, went on; lumbered along patiently and unhurriedly through the grey, rainy darkness. Once more Ambrosius was sitting in a slow train. He had got in anywhere, got into the wrong class, into the wrong train. He was in no hurry to get back to his desecrated house.

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He sat uncomfortably on the hard bench. The revolver in his hip pocket got in the way whenever he tried to lean back, so he let himself sink forward, hunched up. His hands, on which the cuts now began to burn, swung loosely backwards and forwards.

"We must change here, Herr Professor," said Helene softly, after an incalculable length of time.

He followed her obediently. The little station outside was hidden by curtains of rain. A few lights were burning, the air from the river could now be felt, and beyond the station lights, the hills bordering the plain. Ambrosius, bare-headed and almost staggering in his walk, followed Helene like a child to the local train which was already in. A long wait. Whistles, signals, the jolt of starting. They were alone in their compartment.

"Are you ill?" asked Helene, after she had watched him for some little while in silence, half raising her hands as though to help him.

"Me, ill? No! Why? I'm quite all right," he answered hastily. "Just tired," he added, and the words had a note of longing in them.

"We shall be home in ten minutes," said Helene.

Ambrosius stood up, went to the window, through which nothing but wet darkness could be seen, and leant his brow against the panes.

He was suffering unspeakably. Inaction was causing him almost a physical pain. As in a thunderstorm, there was immense energy pent up within him seeking release, potential lightning and thunder which threatened to rend him. But no such relief had been vouchsafed him. No fighting with tooth and claw, no violence, no means of working off his torment, no tearing asunder, murdering or slaying, such as he craved. He had broken a mirror, fired a few boastful shots, taken part in a scene, scored a few points in a drawing-room comedy—that was all.

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In his unappeased heart his torment burned almost unbearably. Suddenly he was shaken by some profound upheaval, relief was granted him in some strange mysterious way, and he wept.

Helene who was sitting on the wooden bench, gazing at the broad outline of his back, was shocked to see his head bowed down and pressed against the window pane. She heard a broken sound—the broad shoulders heaved, the back shuddered, the whole gigantic frame of the man was shaken more and more violently as though by a paroxysm. He grasped the nets of the luggage racks on either side, and stood there like a tree in a fierce storm, and from him broke a great and pitiful cry like that of an animal.

Helene Willfüer crouched trembling on her bench. Dear God, she thought, what is the matter? What is this? What can I do, a stranger? . . .

She stood up, carried away by the sight of this man weeping, and laid her trembling hands on his broad, shaken shoulders; she ventured even more. She gently stroked his damp hair. It seemed to her as though she had a wounded and precious animal to comfort; and the man—just like an animal or a child—feeling this desire to comfort, cried aloud. He let himself go. He loosened his hold of the luggage racks, abandoned the support of the window pane, and fell at Helene's feet as though at a mother's. She put her arms around him, clasped him tightly, strongly, like a woman. He laid his head on her shoulder, still weeping, but now growing easier for it. Suddenly they became conscious of one another, of their bodies, their warmth, their tears, their hands, and at last their lips which sought each other and clung to each other—and lost each other again. Here was the lightning flash; a revelation, a recognition, a great happiness in the midst of tribulation.

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As suddenly it passed, vanished in shame and embarrassment.

"Stupid of me, a bit overstrained," murmured Professor Ambrosius, with a pale face.

And Fräulein Willfür answered with trembling lips: "It's nerves—it happens sometimes."

The train stopped.

"Since when have you been wearing lace-trimmed underclothes?" asked the Gulrapp, turning her little owl-like face to Helene, who was rustling among tissue-paper on the bed behind her.

Helene disappeared behind the screen without answering.

"You've become a sort of Messalina," the Gulrapp said spitefully. She was just about to take her degree. She had finished her dissertation, incomplete and fragmentary though it was. Life together for these two students, each of whom had her own burden of fear and anxiety to bear, had become almost impossible. They rubbed one another up the wrong way and their frayed nerves were a constant torment.

"Messalina is just the word. You're so very clever," answered Helene from behind the screen in a subdued voice.

It was a close, heavy day, with the sun shining behind a sky overcast with white clouds, and myriads of gnats—the famous large gnats of the town—danced their little wedding feasts before the windows.

"You are driving me to distraction with your cosmetic rites behind there," the Gulrapp complained, as Helene scrubbed her nails.

"You'll soon be rid of me. I have only got to write one letter," Helene answered, making her appearance in a white dress.

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"What's the matter? Are you going dancing? You look like a popinjay!" commented the exasperated Gulrapp.


"No—not dancing exactly. But I am taking a holiday—and that calls for something festive," said Helene, standing still in the middle of the room and looking with one brief sweeping glance out of the window, over the town, over the river, to the hills—and beyond. . . .

She sat down behind her flowerpots and wrote a long letter, during which she kept her lips pressed together in a firm and determined manner.

"Dear Friedel," she wrote, "dear little Friedel, I am writing you this letter just before I go away, and I have chosen this solemn hour on purpose, because I want my words to carry weight. You must believe me, little Friedel, and you must do what I tell you. I shall not be able to talk to you myself any more—the reason why, you will perhaps have learned by the time this letter reaches you—but I beg you earnestly to do what I ask you.

"I know that Marx has broken off his engagement with you. I have seen your tear-stained eyes and your helplessness. But I know, my dear, why he has done it, and I will tell you, because he has not had the courage to do so himself. Marx is ill, Friedel. He has been punished for a mistake which we girls cannot comprehend, with an illness of which we know nothing. You will be very unhappy when I tell you this—more unhappy than you are already. But you must not stop loving him. You must hold him now; you must do that—for he is in great danger.

"He came to me and asked for some cyanide of potassium. I am forced to tell you this, so that you may know what might happen to him. He is on the



point of throwing his life away, because he cannot bear the thought of losing you, and losing you through his own fault. I am standing so apart from you all to-day, so free of the world, that the word fault means nothing to me now. We are all liable to make such strange mistakes, and our views are so narrow and we are all of us being driven, even though we imagine we control things. Perhaps your innocence is as much to blame, when weighed in the balance, as his guilt. I don't suppose you will be able to understand that yet, dear innocent little Friedel, with those large, timid, grey eyes that I can see before me so distinctly at this moment. But you will understand later on. Now there is only one thing that matters : you must not be a little girl any longer, you must become a strong woman—you must exert all your feminine powers and hold Marx. You must love him, you must forgive him everything, and you must hold him, hold him, help him and bind him to life with all your strength.

"You must imagine that you hold the balance in your hands with the 'yea' and the 'nay' on the scales, death and life. You can tip the balance, it rests with you. You must love, love, love—nothing else is asked of you. Be good, be strong, be patient.

"My time is up. I am writing to you before I go away. The bells are already ringing for vespers from the Jesuit Church. I am looking out of my window and bidding farewell. Life is a marvellous thing, little Friedel ; it is a wonderful gift to be allowed to live—that much I tell you at this moment. I have always been glad to be alive, but I have never felt it as much as I do now. Farewell, dear little Friedel ; I am so fond of you. You must go to Marx to-morrow and take him by the hand and never let him go again. We must never be afraid, my dear, we must only be faithful.

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We must go with our friends to the end of the journey—you with Marx, and I with Rainer. Now I must say good-bye. Good-bye, little Friedel."

Helene leant her head on her hands and gazed out of the window. There was a dancing, oppressive heat outside. The flowers in the pots smelled strongly, as though they were feverish. Helene took up her pen again and wrote.

"Please take care of my flowers when I am no longer here. Gulrapp is too distracted."

Then the letter was sealed.

"I am going now, Gulrapp," said Helene, and stood for another moment in the middle of the room.

"Off you go. You have my blessing," answered Gulrapp, deep in her books. Helene came up behind her and laid her large, rather cool hand on the black, gleaming hair of her comrade. Gulrapp responded by trying to shake the hand away with a little shudder.

"You mustn't keep on touching me," she answered, exasperated. "I can't stand it."

Poor Gulrapp, fighting so gamely against yourself, day by day, and night by night; repressing your wasted affection, that bitter secret. . . . Your little person seems to become more and more ethereal, your eyes behind their spectacles look more distraught; the thin, ivory hands become more and more shaking as further and further away slips the triumphant conclusion, the inward satisfaction, the sense of completion in your restless soul. Thus did Helene bid good-bye to you on that hot, oppressive afternoon. She knew you to be highly talented, to have the power to become a leading authority on archæology, yet she had little hope for you, Gudula Rapp, since your dissertation had remained no more than a patchwork.

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You would take your degree. But you would excavate no fantastic towns in the desert, you would lead no expeditions, make no journeys. You would make a laborious living among dead and dusty objects, composing short, dry articles for periodicals, that would not understand them. Perhaps you might be met again as you sat poring short-sightedly over lengthy indexes, cataloguing and arranging some third-rate collection. Helene had a high opinion of you, Gudula Rapp, and had formed a tender and respectful friendship for you in those years sharing your crooked room, and listening to your breathing at night, and seeing you, day in, day out, working studiously at your writing-desk. She took her hand from your small, black-lacquered head, since you could not bear it, and she left you, Gulrapp, as the church bells died away and her heart began to ache. . . .

Helene Willfüer left the dark stairs behind her, the scrolled front door, the clinical shop-window of the worthy widow, and passed with her long strides from the alley in which children were playing and a puppy barking with noisy cheerfulness. She dropped the letter into a pillar-box at the corner and crossed over the Corn Market. Her walk had changed in the last few weeks ; without her knowing it, something careful had stolen into her carriage, the care of the woman who bears a precious burden.

In the main street she lingered before a shop-window in which medical and surgical instruments were displayed for sale. After a little hesitation she entered the shop and asked for a hypodermic syringe of approximately 15 cc. content, which she tested with an apparently professional air before she paid for it. Next she paid a brief call at Kranich's bookshop. Although Kranich was pleased by her visit, there was something depressed and self-centred about him. It seemed to



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Helene that everyone was a captive in his own little circle of trouble and sorrow. She herself was quite at home in loneliness, as strong characters always are who have had to fight their own battles alone and have silently conquered. She stretched out her hand, which refused to get warm that day, over the counter and received the strong pressure of his feverish fingers.

"What's the matter with you, Kranich? I don't like the look of you."

"Oh, nothing. Nothing much. It seems that a new place has broken out. We must wait for the X-ray photograph—but don't let's talk of that. Can I do anything for you, Fräulein Helene?"

"No, thank you. I have tidied up at home to-day. There are one or two more books that belong to you. The small Döderlein—and one thing and another; could you have them fetched?"

"Well, there's no great hurry."

"No—there's no hurry," said Helene absent-mindedly.

"What is more important, I must congratulate Herr Rainer. He has passed his State examination, and very well too, I hear. That's fine. You share in that success and pleasure, don't you? When are we going to celebrate it? I'll look after the wines, if I may?"

"How you do love pleasure, Kranich! Rainer wants to feed alone with me on the old Berghof to-night, and to celebrate quite quietly, *à deux*. You'll hear from us again to-morrow, I expect. It's awfully nice of you to want to give him some fun. You are a good creature, Kranich—I must tell you that, this once."

"Good heavens, Fräulein Willfür—you make me feel quite embarrassed!"

"I can't help that, Kranich. I am going to tell you. I don't want you to think me ungrateful. You have helped me a great deal both actually and by your example.

I have never talked about it, but when everything has gone wrong I have always thought—there is always Kranich.”

“And quite right too. You stick to that! Just rely on me in every possible way, Fräulein Willfür, if that doesn’t sound too boastful!” he said emphatically, gesticulating with his artificial limb. “And we’ll have a fine celebration. We’ll have a real feast in honour of our young doctor.”

“What an appetite you have for life, Kranich,” said Helene, looking thoughtfully into his face with its sunken cheeks, the shadowy signs of decay.

“Yes, I have an appetite for life; I admit I have, Fräulein Willfür. Do you consider that to be a fault?”

“*Auf wiedersehen!*” said Helene suddenly, and turned round and walked rapidly away. Kranich looked after her in astonishment and sadly let his wooden hand fall.

Rainer was already waiting on the terrace of the castle. He too was in holiday garb, wearing his best suit, a silk shirt and a new tie.

“There you are, dear!” he said, taking Helene’s arm warmly. “Punctual as usual—never letting Firilei wait. And how fine and festive you look to-day!”

“Have you got everything?” he added, as they crossed the courtyard of the castle and made their way towards the woods.

“Everything. And you?”

“Here,” said Rainer, drawing a small package out of his pocket. “All that we need.”

“How did you get it?”

“Pinched it! Twenty ampoules won’t be missed much in the clinic,” he replied, with rather a forced smile. There was something flickering and feverishly

cheerful in his behaviour. Helene, walking beside him with her long strides, asked :

"Are you excited, Firilei ?"

"Yes, I am excited. But pleasantly excited, Hele, as though I were looking forward to a great pleasure. For it is our festival, you——"

Helene stood still.

"How beautiful it all looks down there. Do look at it once more."

They turned towards the town and drank in the evening view, the restfulness, the soft evanescence of the whole familiar scene. The sun was sinking in the west behind thin clouds. In the east there was a patch of blue sky, and in the plains, far distant, the river gleamed yet again.

"Isn't it beautiful, Firilei ?"

"Yes. Beautiful. But not so beautiful as you are."

"You mustn't let me weaken, Firilei. I have been very stern with myself. I don't want to turn sentimental at the end."

"You sentimental ! You are so strong ! Or—are you afraid, Helene ?"

"No. Not really. You know, I haven't enough imagination to be afraid. I am such a matter-of-fact person, I can't imagine anything—and so I am not often afraid. It is one's thoughts that make one weak and fearful."

"Yes, thoughts," said Rainer, and withdrew into himself. They entered the wood.

Inside it was already twilight. There was a secret, urgent warmth in the green half-light. The birds were still singing in a chorus which gradually became quieter and softer until, with a few last fluting notes, they all fell asleep. In the silence which followed, the two could hear the sound of their footsteps over the soft

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ground. Somewhere a little hidden stream was rushing down to the valley.

"I can hear everything so distinctly to-day. I can feel everything so acutely," ventured Helene cautiously, much later. "My heart is so large. I can feel it beating all through me."

Rainer halted, took her head in both his hands and looked long and closely into her eyes.

"It is an indescribably beautiful thought that you bear a child within you," he whispered almost inaudibly, but Helene understood him, full of wonder and tender gratitude.

"And if that—didn't exist," she said afterwards, as they walked on, "if this had not happened as well—would you have had the courage to live, Firilei?"

"I don't know. I can't say. I don't think so. I have always felt that I would die young, always. I have been almost certain of it. All that I have been given to bear has been too much for me. I have always just sort of dragged myself along. But I am not a beast of burden. Some people can stand that sort of thing, but I can't. When things happen all at once, they become unbearable to me, that is a fact. Don't let's talk about it any more. We have argued it and thought it all out a hundred times. There is only one thing left for us to do, and it is marvellous that man has been given this means of escape, that we have been given this freedom. Life is a prison with an unlocked door, Helene. It is lovely to leave it of one's own free will."

"Yes. That's true. I like the idea of the 'prison,' Firilei. It's quite true. But to stay in it can be lovely, too. Not just to exist, but to stay of one's own free will, despite——"

"Despite—that is your word. You are completely attached to life, Hele," said Rainer, smiling. "You are

still sounding your fanfare. Tell me, Helene, are you not quite convinced about our decision? That it is the only thing left for us to do?"

"Oh, yes. I am convinced, Firilei. But surely I may be a little sorry that everything should be at an end. I have worked so much in my life, I have put up with so much hardship, and I have had so little fun. And it has all been of no avail. Chemistry, no use; future, no use; all finished. Surely I may say: 'It's a pity'? You see we have always been like this, as though we were standing on the opposite banks of a stream. I would have liked to have had the strength to draw you over to my side, to the bright side, where the simple folk live, like myself, or Marx, or Meier. . . . But now everything is changed, everything is barred and obstructed on all sides, without and within," said Helene, and at the word "within" the picture of Ambrosius appeared somewhere deep down in her heart, "and in the end, you have proved the stronger of the two. You have converted me. You have drawn me over to your bank. I am beside you—and we won't complain any more. We will go through your open door without protesting, Firilei. Look how the evening is drawing in! We must store up this evening peace deep within us, for we shall never experience it again. You must hold me very close to-day, you must be very fond of me, my Firilei."

The meadows were already covered with dew. On the long grass stalks butterflies were sleeping with folded wings, hundreds, thousands of white butterflies. They looked in the darkness like the tiniest of sailing-boats sailing on a sea of mist, or like some strange, pale, dream-flowers.

"Tell me again about that Japanese god," said Helene, after a long silence during which they had climbed upwards, breathing hard, and had entered the

deeper darkness of a pine-wood which filled the night air with its resinous scent. "I asked Gulrapp about him. She knows of him, too."

"Shinogami is the god's name," said Rainer, after a pause. "Shinogami, the god of the desire for death. Lovers whom life keeps asunder pray to him. They pray to him, they bring him their offerings and then they put on festal garments and seek death together. Festal—that is the idea, Helene. They take one another in their arms and empty one cup together, or sink from the side of a boat into the water—those young people for whom life is too hard. Shunij, they call it in Japan. That is to say, roughly, death of the heart. And they hope to be born again together, Helene; together and for ever united. That is why they celebrate it as a festival. Their friends accompany them in white robes to the grave and sing lovely songs of transfiguration and rebirth. It is a custom that is practised a great deal—in Japan."

Rainer had related this like a legend and without looking at Helene. Only at the end did he smile, as though to emphasise his spoken word. He still did not look at Helene. He bent down towards the sleeping blades of grass and touched one lightly, making it tremble and sway gently. A sleeping butterfly spread its wings and fluttered drowsily to the next dew-wet grass stem. It had become unutterably silent in the twilight of the wood.

"Yes," said Helene, "I see."

Then there was a deep silence again.

When they reached the edge of the wood and could already see the lights of the Berghof twinkling in a dip in the meadows, Helene stood still, her eyes gleaming in the soft darkness. The sky was still overcast and quite starless, but there was a hint of the moon behind the clouds, and a pale, even radiance spread to the horizon.

Bats fluttered mysteriously from the wood to the fruit-trees on the hill slopes, and a damp sigh of wind carried on it the sweet evening scent of clematis.

"Look! Stop! Keep quite still," whispered Helene. "Can you feel? Can you smell? Can you hear?"

Rainer was obliged to laugh at the hungry way in which she opened her eyes, her mouth, her nostrils, so as to savour everything at once.

"Now all the birds are asleep. I can feel it. I can feel them all in their nests, how warm and downy they are, and how sleepy and comfortable. That's how I should like things to be—comfortable and safe like that. I'd like things to be comfortable, Firilei, please; all comfortable. I should like not to have to be strong. I am so tired. I should like to be allowed to be tired for once and to rest and not do anything at all, just let things happen. I must be comfortable. I want to be a little bird in a little nest and go to sleep. Will it be like that?"

"Yes, yes," whispered Rainer. "It will be like that. Just like that, Helene. Now everything is hard and exhausting, but suddenly everything will be all right. Then you will be all that you want to be. A bird, a flower, a star, a seed in the earth or a tree bearing fruit."

"Yes, I'd rather be a tree."

"You must trust me. You must not be afraid. Nothing else will happen to you, it will all be left behind you. You will just go to sleep and everything will be all right."

"Stop! Wait a moment. I am not afraid. Tell me again exactly what it will be like. I want to know how it happens."

"Come, give me your hands, both of them. How cold they are! Oh, Hele, dear Hele, for the first time you seem small and weak. How sweet it is, and how much I

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love you for it. Now, you see, when things have reached a crisis, clumsy Firilei is in his right place and can help you. First, we will go down to the Berghof and spend as happy an evening as we can. Then, when we are tired, we'll drink a little more wine—champagne perhaps—to make us glad and to make it easy for us ; then I will fill the syringe and take you in my arms and give you an injection. That is only a little pinprick, you will scarcely feel it. Then I will fill the syringe again for myself. Then you will grow sleepy, uncontrollably sleepy ; and then we shall fall asleep together. At first perhaps we shall dream a little—of something beautiful, lovely—and then—we shan't even dream any more. . . . And that is all, Helene."

They left the edge of the wood and descended the slope of the meadow. It was the meadow of Helene's dream, in which she had lain in a mass of wild orchis. Behind the small Berghof Restaurant a spring trickled, two old fir-trees stood out black against the railings of the gateway ; a dog barked.

Could they have a room for the night, his wife and he ? asked Rainer, with a show of self-possession, of the landlady, who appeared blinking in the hall. Certainly. By all means. They were used to couples coming to put up for the night there.

Could they still have something to eat in the garden ? asked Helene. She was hungry and there was no further need to economise.

A lantern was hung in the garden ; a table was laid ; in the kitchen there was cooking and frying for the belated guests. Moths made their appearance, an intoxicatingly sweet smell of lilies penetrated from the garden ; a light breeze sprang up from the wood, and shook the sleeping fruit-trees, shaking the unripe pears, which fell with soft thuds into the grass.


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"We must have flowers," said Rainer, feverish and excited. He obtained the landlady's permission and they went into the small cottage garden on the slope of the hill, and picked lilies. The trumpets stood out very white in the mild darkness, beneath the soft, shining heavens. They gave forth a ravishing, passionate scent and each trumpet was full of dew. All was so silent and expectant in the night that every sound seemed isolated and lonely.

They returned to their table. Their shoes were damp, their hands were damp, and so was their hair. They entwined their fingers and exchanged glances. It was like a bridal ceremony, and yet they were full of fear and apprehension. They drank wine; the sweet, golden-yellow wine of the district. It ran heavy in their veins. They dared not speak any more. They were so afraid. They were so young; they desired death and yet they were afraid. They smiled, they both smiled continually, like two pale, exaggerated masks in the light of the lantern. They ate a little but they were not really hungry—only thirsty. They ordered a second bottle and clinked their cheap glasses.

"To Eternity," said Rainer in a husky voice. They dared not look at one another, for they both felt as though they were about to commit a crime.

They could hear a cricket chirping loudly in the silence of the night, continuously, continuously, continuously. Rainer ordered a third bottle of wine and some glasses to be brought to their room. Once again a breeze sprang up from the hills and swayed the tops of the fruit trees; once again the unripe fruit fell into the grass. They lingered a little longer; their clasped fingers loosened and relaxed.

Suddenly Rainer blenched in the light of the lantern.

"I believe it is time," he said, and got up.

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Helene, with pale, tightly closed lips, went before him into the house.

Early in the morning, before six o'clock, there was a violent ringing at the bell of the house in which bookseller Kranich lived with his mother. He thrust his head out of the window and caught sight of Fräulein Willfüer standing down below in the narrow alley, holding herself up by a lamp-post. He dragged on his clothes, hampered by his cripple's helplessness, and ran down-stairs.

"Kranich," said Helene, "something dreadful has happened . . . at the old Berghof. Rainer . . . he is dead . . . we must fetch him."

She was wearing a thin white dress, which was wringing wet to the knees, a mass of grass stains, tears, creases. Her hair hung heavy over her forehead, and the hands which she raised helplessly before her were dirty. A baker's boy passing with his basketful of rolls stopped and stared at her.

"Rainer — dead? Good God! How? And you——?"

"He has killed himself. We were together. I ran away."

"Come, Helene, you must calm yourself. Go inside to my mother, stay here. I'll go for the police. I'll do everything that's necessary."

"Do, please. Thank you," whispered Helene and dragged herself into the house. Her knees felt as though they would give way, but she forced herself to conquer this weakness. She sank down on a cherry-wood sofa; a bird in a cage was trilling its sweet, early-morning song; there was a smell of coffee. Kranich's old mother, who was hard of hearing, shuffled in on slippered feet without asking questions. A clock struck, an old-

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fashioned clock, on which two bronze figures were paying court to one another.

Shortly afterwards a car containing two inconspicuous men drove up. Helene Willfüer was arrested.

Now she was sitting in a cell. She clasped her hands round her knees and thought things over. She was able to sit for hours like that, thinking, with a brooding, profound expression on her face, and now and then she would smile. It is all right, she thought, it is all right, everything is in order. Firilei is dead; that is just as it should be; and I am alive, and that is as it should be, too. I mustn't be afraid. I must see it through. It was very quiet in the cell, and that helped Helene. She was able to collect herself. She was able to piece together the fragments of her shattered existence. High up out of reach in the wall there was a little barred window, through which a pale ray of sunshine streamed. The shadow of the bars stole round the walls as the moments passed, and the church clock could be heard in the stillness striking the hours. It was good, like this, and peaceful. Occasionally, eyes peered through the spy-hole in the door. Helene disliked this. Sitting there in her dirty, disordered white frock, she had to think out her life afresh; she needed peace for that.

But outside in the town, there was great excitement over the case. The newspapers discussed the matter from psychological and criminological angles. It was talked about in the lecture-rooms and at the refectory tables. And the Public Prosecutor suspecting homicide ordered an enquiry.

At eleven twenty-two in the evening, the medical student, Fritz Rainer, had taken a room at the old Berghof in company with Helene Willfüer, student of chemistry. During the night, the innkeeper had been aware of loud talking, probably quarrelling. In the

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morning, the student was found dead in bed, unclothed, with the puncture of a hypodermic syringe in the right forearm. The girl had apparently fled from the Berghof through the window, as was evidenced by footprints. Such were the facts. The Public Prosecutor did his duty. The enquiry was opened.

The examining magistrate was a younger and kindlier man, with velvety eyes, to which he endeavoured to impart an appearance of depth. He had effeminate white hands and wore a diamond ring. He conducted the examination with consideration and gentleness. He sat in a public room which smelt musty, and all the time he drew pictures of grapes on blank sheets of paper—luxurious, baroque bunches of grapes. His clerk sat with hunched shoulders over his shorthand notes, and from time to time bored with his little finger into his ears in order to sharpen his hearing and his wits. Helene took all this in with great distinctness, although she kept her eyes lowered, making her replies slowly and with great concentration. It was rather like sinking a well, a combined labour of creation and extraction, during which she sifted and clarified her own ideas, ably supported by the magistrate, who was well-schooled in all the tricks of psychology. The accusation of homicide—of murder, to put it bluntly—she denied with such quiet, smiling incredulity that the magistrate changed his ground. Aiding and abetting, then—homicide, with the connivance of the deceased.

But no, Rainer did it himself; he himself had injected the fatal dose of morphia, Helene asserted with composed, tight lips. She did not cry, did not make a scene. She was not hysterical. Her answers were as matter-of-fact as though she were a conscientious and zealous colleague of the magistrate. In common with him, she was unable to get over the fact that the injection had been in the

right arm. The *right* arm, if you please, which was altogether abnormal and entirely excluded the possibility of suicide.

They had found her finger-prints on the syringe, mingled with those of the deceased. . . . But—this was strange and suspicious—on the neck of the corpse there were finger-marks, more than that—discolorations, bluish, suffused marks. . . .

To this Helene Willfüer made no reply at first.

She was very pale, very tired, very overwrought. They led her away to the cell. This was done by two police officers stiffly at attention, as laid down by the regulations in cases of suspected murder. And now Helene was sitting in her cell again. It grew darker. She drank some water, lay down, even slept a little, heavily and without dreaming. Once more it was day, the bars black against the morning brightness; light again, and the shadow of the bars moving. . . . She was not entirely alone; a long-legged insect, an ichneumon fly, was crawling head downwards over the ceiling and walls. A living creature, almost a friend.

The prison regulations enclosed Helene with their discipline, and in its way this was good for her. Helene loved strictness, hardness and privation. She had come very near to ruining her life through softness in these last weeks, and now she was surrounded again with discipline and order and rigid exactitude.

Walls, silence, patience. . . . Again the two officers, some stairs to be traversed, and so back to the public room of the examining magistrate.

The second day of the examination.

"We are fairly clear about the history of the preceding period," said the magistrate. "Now we will continue. According to your statements, you had agreed with Rainer that you would die together. For this purpose

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you went to the old Berghof. Did you turn in there on the spur of the moment, or did this happen according to plan?"

"According to plan. We thought it would be nicest there."

"I see. You had an evening meal and drank a fair amount. At 11.22 you left the garden and went to your room. Will you tell me what happened after that?"

"Yes. We went to our room. I turned on the light, but Rainer put it out and left only a small bedside lamp burning. He poured out some more wine for himself and drank off two glasses quickly, one after the other. I had opened the window and was looking out. I said, 'It will rain to-morrow,' for it was very close and there wasn't a single star to be seen. Rainer laughed out loud when I said that."

"Was Rainer drunk?"

"No, not drunk. He was very—elated."

"Elated, then. How did this show itself?"

"He talked a great deal and very loudly and strangely. It sounded almost like delirium. He seemed to be feverish, and talked a lot about his earliest childhood."

"Did he become affectionate to you?"

"Yes."

"Was there any intimacy that evening?"

"No."

"Did he molest you? Did you defend yourself against him? Your relations had been intimate previously."

"I had a headache. We had taken some lilies up to our room, and their scent gave me a headache. Rainer left me alone at once, as soon as I had told him my head ached."

"And then? What happened after that?"

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"Rainer went and shut the window. I was frightened then."

"You were frightened, why?"

"I thought: now the time has come. Then Rainer came to me and led me to the bed. He said, 'Lie down. You are tired.' He helped me to undress. He was very gentle and good. Then he undressed too. Finally, he put our shoes outside the door. I noticed that, because it was so funny."

"You noticed that? You quite understand that those shoes outside the door weigh against you? One does not put one's shoes out to be cleaned if one is contemplating suicide; at least, it is not likely."

"Yes, it is, sir. I have been through the experience and I know that it is quite impossible for one to imagine oneself as dead, as not existing. One does silly, absurd things. I noticed that at the time," said Helene calmly.

"Very well. We will leave the shoes for the moment. You were both undressed then, and you both got into bed without any intimate relations taking place?"

"No, I was the only one to get into bed. Rainer unpacked the morphia and the syringe, standing so that I could not see what he was doing."

"Why?"

"I don't know. It is a doctor's habit, perhaps. He looked for some matches, and lit one after another. I saw the light and asked, 'What are you doing, Firlei?' ('That was a pet name,' she said, hesitating and blushing a little.) 'He answered, 'I must sterilise the needle.' I laughed and said, 'No sort of infection will matter much to us to-morrow, Firlei.' Then I heard him break open the ampoule, that made a little clinking noise. Then he must have filled the syringe, but I could only see his back. I began to feel cold and covered myself up. I started to tremble. I could do nothing to stop it, and

I felt very ashamed of it. Rainer put the syringe down on the table and came up to the bed and said, 'Are you afraid?' "

"Were you afraid?"

"Yes."

"Did you try to talk Rainer round into giving up his intention? Was there a quarrel?"

"No. That didn't happen yet."

"When?"

"Later, when he took up the syringe and came near me."

"And what had happened in the meantime?"

"Nothing. We talked. Rainer talked to me."

"What did he say?"

"I would rather not say anything about that."

The examining magistrate shaded a few grapes and drew a spiral tendril. Suddenly, he left Rainer standing unclothed in the middle of the room, and went off at a tangent.

"Have you been intimate with any other men during the last weeks?" he asked brusquely.

"I? No! But, why ever——?"

"Have you had any relations with Professor Ambrosius?"

"No, no!" said Helene Willfürer, her lips turning pale. "That is absurd," she added in a whisper.

"You were observed one night leaving the station arm in arm with Professor Ambrosius, having apparently returned from a journey together."

"Good heavens! That was long ago. We had met accidentally—and he had been taken ill on the journey."

"Perhaps Rainer was jealous of the Professor? Did you wish to break off your affair with him? Was he objecting?"

"Rainer? No! He knew nothing about it."


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"Ah! He knew nothing about it. You were hiding something from him?"

"No, there was nothing to hide. There wasn't anything to suspect. I was thinking of mental things, things which I can account for to nobody—not even to myself," said Helene shortly, and the same brooding expression returned to her tired face.

"Very well. We will leave Ambrosius out of the picture for the moment. Can you explain to me how it was that you ever came to think of a suicide pact? I see two young people before me, healthy, free to do what they will, having a love affair which seems to have been happy. Rainer had just passed his State examination with success. You yourself are just about to take your degree. I look in vain for any psychological support for your statements."

"Rainer had very little courage to face life with; he was not happy in his studies or his career. And in addition there were family troubles. He had just recently learned that his father was suffering from an incurable disease. He did not feel strong enough to bear the responsibilities which were put upon him. Beside that, there was his whole outlook on life, his negative attitude to life."

"Well, I will leave it for the moment whether that sort of weariness of life could have produced sufficient courage to commit suicide. But let us assume that Rainer wished to die. Then what caused you yourself to agree to a suicide pact, as you put it? You had no reason."

"I was under his influence."

"You yourself say that he was weak-willed; whereas you, on the other hand, give one the impression of being very energetic and determined. I can find no likelihood in your story. When I sum up the facts, they appear

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to me to be as follows : Rainer, a weak character, had a latent desire for death. You were beginning to be attracted in another direction and were not, therefore, strong enough to bind him to life. I will ignore the possibility of premeditated homicide for the moment. You had promised the weak and not very courageous Rainer your help in his death and, with his connivance, you brought it about. Such action is punishable, but not criminal. It would be better if you confessed and admitted your responsibility for that. It would secure you a much lighter sentence than any lies you may tell."

"Sir," said Helene, "I admit that things might have been as you suggest. It would have been possible. But it was not so. They happened in a different way. Rainer had the courage, but I had not. I only have the courage to face life. I have none to face death. With Rainer it was just the opposite."

With an expression that conveyed "It's a pity you are so obstinate," the magistrate returned to an earlier point in the proceedings.

"You were, then, under Rainer's influence. Was that a sufficient reason for you to have had enough of life?"

"I had troubles too."

"What sort of troubles?"

"Personal troubles. And money troubles. I am alone in the world and am almost destitute. I have had heavy expenses lately—too heavy for my circumstances—and I was afraid that I should not be able to finish my studies."

The examining magistrate put his pencil down and looked sharply into Helene's face.

"You have been in touch with a person who has already been convicted several times, by name Rauner," he said. "Do you admit that?"

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"Yes. I called on him once," said Helene nervously, in a low voice.

"Did he attempt an illegal operation on you?"

"No."

"You will be examined by the police doctor. I advise you to tell the truth."

"I—am going to have a baby," said Helene, turning pale.

"Oh, that is very important. Is the child Rainer's or Ambrosius's?"

"I would prefer not to reply to such questions," said Helene, her lips cold.

A pause. The clerk bored in his ears and stared expectantly at the magistrate's mouth. The magistrate was summing things up. He had formed his own private opinion, and he returned now to Rainer and the hypodermic syringe.

"You were in bed then. Rainer took the syringe from the table and came up to you. Then you quarrelled. Why was that?"

"I was overcome with a boundless fear, a wild fear of death. I pushed right up against the wall and screamed: 'No! Not yet! I don't want to, yet!'"

"And Rainer?"

"Rainer became sad, or angry, I don't know what to call it. He was altogether so changed that evening. He tried to persuade me. He held me fast. He said, 'Be good. It won't hurt. And your headache will disappear, too!' He tried to touch me with the syringe."

"And you?"

"I jumped out of bed and ran to the window. I screamed, 'I don't want you to do it. Leave me alone! I will do it myself. I won't be forced.' Yes, that is what happened."

"And then?"

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"Rainer shouted something at the same time. I could not understand it because I was talking myself and was almost mad with fear. I believe he cried, 'You are leaving me alone!' Then he said no more. I clung to the window and I noticed that my hands were shaking and my teeth chattering. I wanted to say something more, but I couldn't because my lips were trembling so much. It was like having a fit. I would never have believed that fear could make one lose control of oneself to such an extent. I simply could not stop the shaking."

"Yes, and then?"

"Then everything became quiet behind me. I looked round, and Rainer was sitting on the bed. His eyes were so strange, and then the syringe fell out of his hand. Then I knew that it had already happened."

"Now, Fräulein Willfüer, try very carefully to remember. As you lay in bed and Rainer came up to you with the syringe, in which hand was he holding the syringe?"

"I don't know."

"It is important. You must trust me. Try and imagine yourself back in the situation again and think hard. In which hand was he holding the syringe?"

"Everything that happened then is hazy," murmured Helene, closing her eyes. At first she saw nothing, only a veil, a mere glimmer of light; then, with startling suddenness, Rainer stood before her, very distinctly, in minute detail. He was standing under a street lamp, with upturned face and, in his left hand, hanging at his side, he was holding something: not a hypodermic syringe—no, flowers, snowdrops, with damp earth clinging to their roots. . . .

"I believe that he was holding the syringe in his *left* hand," said Helene softly, almost as though talking in her sleep.

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"Where was the syringe lying after Rainer dropped it?"

"On the little table by the bed. I picked it up. I had suddenly stopped shaking. I had become quite calm and clear-headed. Now it is my turn, I thought. Rainer looked at me with his drugged eyes. He wanted to say something apparently, for he moved his lips, but no words came. 'I'm just coming,' I said to him. I do not know whether he understood me. I took the syringe to the table and began to refill it. I was quite calm now. As I broke open the third ampoule, I heard a sound, and when I turned round, Rainer had fallen back on the bed. I threw the syringe away and supported him. His eyes were almost closed. I pushed my arm under his head and sat and held him in my arms like that. He was breathing evenly and he became very heavy. Then I began to feel cold sitting there holding him in my arms. I pulled the bedclothes over us. It was just as if Rainer were sleeping. Later, I do not know how long afterwards, his breathing rattled, and his lower jaw fell. I put my hand under his chin and closed his jaw. He was still breathing, but hardly noticeably. So I sat there, closing his jaw. I do not know how long this went on. I do not even know when the end came; it was impossible to say, his passing over was so gradual. I believe it lasted for hours. I became quite cold and quite numb. When I stood up, or tried to stand up, my limbs refused to move; then they started to burn and tingle. Then it began to grow light. The birds began to sing. I laid Rainer out on the bed, put the lilies on his breast and covered him over. Then I dressed myself."

"And had you consciously given up your alleged idea of committing suicide?"

"Not consciously—no. Everything was so confused, so unreal. I was somehow indescribably overwrought

and yet at the same time so calm, so exhausted. And the lilies drugged me with their scent, as the window was closed. I opened it, jumped into the garden, and ran away."

"Through fear?"

"If I were to say through fear, it would not be quite correct. Neither would the word courage be right; you would misunderstand it. All the same, by then I had developed a sort of courage to face all the consequences. I thought: What else could happen to me now, after such a night? And then I ran through the wood, down to the town, and I could feel every single blade of grass—but that is my own affair."

"Yes—well, that will do for to-day. Take the prisoner away," said the magistrate, far from satisfied, piling his documents together.

Helene, much affected, rose and went back to her cell, accompanied by her warders. She felt a little easier and clearer. She was still wearing the dirty white dress and she only realised this at that moment. She asked the wardress who appeared with the soup if she might have some other clothes fetched from her home. For the first time she experienced a slight feeling of hunger, and she dipped her rough spoon in the soup. She was waking up slowly and gradually slipping back into life.

"You must eat and you must sleep," said the wardress, with a look of something like pity on her stern, wooden face. "To-morrow you'll need all your strength."

The next day the door was opened with the rasping, metallic clang which Helene already knew. The two officials stood outside wearing coats. . . . Once again the musty chill of the passages, the twilight of the stairways, the long corridors, the stealthy, steely air of the prison. The courtyard, a breath of fresh air, a slant of

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sun, very yellow and blinding, keys, bolts, a grille, a gateway. Outside, in front of the red, fortress-like walls of the old building, a car was waiting. Sitting between the two officers, Helene was driven through the town, which looked strange and remote, as though it were quite foreign to her. They swerved into the hospital quarter and drove up a short street.

They stopped in front of red sandstone walls. A brief, silent passage between two rows of staring people—Helene walked past them very pale and very erect. But this is the dissecting room, Helene thought, confused. She recognised the chestnut tree beneath which she had sometimes waited for Rainer. He will come out in a moment, in his jacket coat, with his slouch hat pulled well over his eyes, and will stretch out his slender hand. . . .

They led her up a spiral staircase, into a large room filled with clear light streaming through huge panes. A group of men in overcoats were standing there silently, their hats in their hands. Helene saw the low, wide, bench-like stone tables. She inhaled the familiar sweet smell of disinfectant. She recognised Hörselmann, the anatomy servant, who was standing with doffed cap by the door. On one of the tables lay some long object covered with a white cloth—a cloth whose stiff folds outlined something stony and motionless. Helene summoned all the strength which was in her. I will be strong, she thought, and waited. A deep, oppressive, gruesome stillness hung over the scene. Hörselmann, hardened though he was by his profession, was obliged to clear his throat to break the silence.

"Please come over here ; there, a little nearer still," said one of the men, who might have been a police doctor. He wore spectacles and his nails were clipped short. Helene noticed these details with extraordinary

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distinctness. Everything was so distinct, the strong light, the outline of the shrouded body, the tiny glints of light in the spectacle lenses which were now all turned towards her, and the faint, distant clanging of a tram-car. For one dizzy second it seemed to Helene that all this was taking place under the earth in an unreal territory, beneath immense roofs, in the depths where nightmares are born. The bare, precise angularity of the whole room, the black-board on the wall, the glittering instrument cupboard in the corner, forced themselves on her perception with a sharpness almost maddening. There were damp marks on one of the stone tables; a fly buzzed invisibly about the room on its minute wings; a tap dripped, dripped. . . .

The doctor reached for the white covering and pulled it back. Helene looked on Rainer's dead features.

She sighed heavily as though sleeping. The sound escaped from her like a burden of which she were freeing herself. It is you, Firilei, she thought, and in the thought was so much tenderness that unconsciously and tremulously she began to smile. She went quite close to the dead man and bent over him. He was asleep now. He was at peace now. He was at home. His features were uplifted and purified in some mysterious way; they looked firm and rigid. One could not imagine death in a more beautiful form than it had assumed in the translucent, alabaster pallor of this youth's peaceful face. It is you, Firilei—she thought—now everything is well with you. Are you content? Are you no longer afraid? Are you vibrating like a note in the ether as you wished, as you said you wanted to, in your last hour? Do you understand now that I had to remain alive? That to live despite it all, Firilei, is the great thing. To live despite it all.

A dry, official voice asked :



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"Do you identify the corpse as that of the medical student, Fritz Rainer?"

"Yes," said Helene startled.

"Take the prisoner away," said the commanding voice of the Public Prosecutor.

The two men marched out with Helene.

"That's a callous creature," said the Public Prosecutor to the examining magistrate as they went down the stairs. "I have seen the most hard-bitten fellows weaken when they have been faced with the corpse and had to identify it. But this one was quite callous."

"Or quite innocent," said the examining magistrate, thereby making himself unpopular.

Hörselmann, left behind in the empty dissecting room, covered the dead man up again. He was thoughtful. It had rarely happened in all his long experience that he had had to prepare his own personal acquaintances for a post-mortem. "I always said that he would never be a doctor," he thought, ironically and with pity, as he prepared the stand for the specimens, scalpels, scissors and saws, ready for the police surgeon.

If the prosecution had hoped to gain any advantage by this confronting of the living Helene Willfüer with the dead Fritz Rainer; if they had hoped that apart from conforming with the regulations it would have a psychological effect on the prisoner, then they were disappointed. The proceedings and the examination of witnesses were set in motion again. They pursued their slow and laborious way without very much result. There were witnesses who praised the prisoner to the skies, and others—Strehl, for instance, her neighbour in the laboratory—who believed her capable of anything, including the brewing of poison, abortion or murder. The widow, Grasmücke, was summoned. Weeping floods of tears beneath her disordered Sunday wig, she

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knew absolutely nothing. A Fräulein Friederike Mannsfeldt produced a letter from the Willfürer which, though not on the whole unfavourable, was nevertheless very ambiguous as far as the main issue was concerned—homicide with the connivance of the deceased. A second letter appeared which was wholly unfavourable; a cheerful letter in which the student Rainer told his parents that he had passed his examination and painted optimistic pictures of the future. It was a particularly impressive letter because it had reached the father of the deceased Rainer in hospital where he had undergone an operation of which the final result seemed uncertain. In the end the whole enquiry centred on a few doubtful moments. The girl, Willfürer, had bought the syringe, that was plain from the evidence. Where the morphia came from remained a mystery. For it was unanimously affirmed in all the clinics that it would be impossible to take away twenty ampoules of 0·02 gr. without its being noticed, owing to the strict manner in which they were kept.

The most suspicious feature, which by itself was sufficient to keep the proceedings alive, and which could not be explained away, say what they would, was the puncture of the injection—that most improbable and altogether unnatural puncture in the right forearm. Police doctors, specialists, doctors of standing and experience were questioned: even the Geheimrat was summoned and growled out a few angry remarks in his Bavarian dialect. He was hardened to all forms of death, and young Rainer had not been one of his favourite students. . . .

Meanwhile, Helene sat in her cell and as the days passed a change came over her, a transformation, a purification, a new growth. She was no longer sad, nor discouraged, nor distracted, nor had she any more fear.

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All that lay behind her. This new Helene Willfüer was strong, she was ready to face life and overcome it, despite everything. There was no question of heroism or display—she set about it in her quiet, matter-of-fact and thorough way. She had books brought to her. Treadwell's *Qualitative Analysis* and Henrich's pleasant book on organic chemistry. These were a protection, a refuge for her thoughts. She was at work again, she concentrated all her thoughts on her theme, on a still-unsolved problem of the effect of hydrazine on certain acids of the aromatic variety. She underwent a new experience. Removed from the laboratory with no means of making practical experiments, no objective outlet, it happened for the first time that something intuitive, creative awoke in her. With strong-beating heart she thought out possibilities, solutions; sitting bent double, she thought with passionate concentration; she discovered paths in the theoretical as yet untrodden. She became impatient, hungry to give form to this intangible structure, to test it by experiment. How she longed for her bench in the laboratory—her deserted bench! What a paradise it seemed, pictured in her thoughts on the blank walls at which she was staring. Her seat in the lecture-room, in the front at the right, with its much-carved desk with her visiting-card on it; the freckled neck of the student in front of her—how clearly, and with what passionate longing she saw all this in her mind. To be free again, to be able to work again, to strive for her goal with teeming brain and excited hands; to be allowed to work again, was all that her soul craved. And now she introduced a new note into the proceedings, which were becoming more and more unproductive, a note of strife and impatience, a note which disturbed the mood of the velvety-eyed examining magistrate.

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And then, one night, something else happened. One night, while she was still awake, but on the borders of dreamland, and her thoughts were turning into fantastic chemical formulas, she felt within her body the slightest, tiniest movement. It lasted only a second. It was only as though an unimaginably small hand had stroked her from within—as though something sleeping deep down within her had rearranged itself and then gone on with its dreaming. She did not believe it at first. She did not quite understand it. For she was only a girl even though this seed had been sown within her to germinate and grow as in the earth. She lay and spread her hands over her body; she sighed heavily once, then she breathed softly, evenly and waited, wondering what that inward something would do now. And it came again, the tenderest movement, the gentlest caress that it is given to a woman to experience.

“You?” whispered Helene, shaken and unbelieving, “is it you?”

She smiled in the darkness, and suddenly her eyes, those eyes that never wept, filled with hot and blessed tears. . . .

Ambrosius also had received a summons to appear as a witness. Since that fatal day, since that violent interruption of his married life, he had lived in his empty villa as one lost and forsaken. The autumn holidays had already begun. There was no need for him to give any lectures, and this was fortunate, for he was unfit for work of any sort. Sometimes he went to the laboratory, pottered about a little, developing vapours of one kind or another and breaking a flask or two, and then he would give up again. He could not work. That was the worst thing of all: he could not work—simply could not work.

This became an obsession with him. He could not

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work. He had been a worker all his life, a forceful worker, a master. There had been nothing that he had not been able to solve or conquer by work. But now he was beaten and fettered. Thought, creation or work was impossible for him. He could not work. Once during the war he had lain buried for three hours, and he felt rather like that now. His world had tumbled about his ears, he felt he was in darkness, suffocating, becoming mad.

He wandered about his house, locked everything up and threw away the keys. The bedroom, the music-room, the piano, the wardrobes, the chests, the drawers—all were locked up and the keys thrown into the river from the bridge. He tore the pictures from the walls and dragged them, his hands smothered in dust, into the attic. He tore gay-coloured cushions to pieces so that the down floated in the air for days; he threw flower-pots into the garden; he buried a little silver powder-bowl in the earth with his hands. He found a shawl, a white silk embroidered Chinese shawl: he tore it to pieces, tooth and nail, carried it to the kitchen yard and threw it among the rubbish. The same night he crept down on bare feet, groaning with shame, and dragged it to his bed, stuffing it under the mattress like an animal, a hungry dog hiding its booty. The scent of her was about him again, bringing its evil dreams. He raved among his books, throwing them in heaps on the ground. He found a Bible, started to read it, hunted through it and read about Samson, who fell in love with a woman on the banks of the River Soreb. But since she worried and plagued him all day long with her tongue, his soul became weary unto death. . . .

He ran away, fled—rushed downhill to the town, to the laboratory. Nothing. Emptiness. Impotence. He could not work. Life was impossible.

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He appeared before the examining magistrate. He had become flabby—a man with troubled eyes. The hair on his forehead was thin and of the colour of dried grass. He plunged his hands in it and tugged at it. He tried to understand what the officials wanted of him. He gave his information in a hoarse voice that was the result of his loneliness.

Yes, Fräulein Willfüer was known to him personally and through her studies, as being intelligent, hard-working and zealous. No, he had no closer or more intimate relations with her. He had met her accidentally on the journey from Frankfurt and he had not been feeling well on that day. He could not recall walking arm in arm with her and did not think it at all likely. He knew nothing of her relations with the young medical student; he had, on the contrary, regarded her as entirely sexless. That she was in a certain condition he learned with momentary astonishment. He thought her quite capable of being an accessory to the fact in certain circumstances, in view of her energetic and strong-willed disposition.

Would it be possible for Willfüer to have obtained the morphia in the laboratory or through her activities as a chemist? asked the examining magistrate.

Morphia—hardly. In ampoules of 0.02 gr.? No. A dosage of 0.2 gr., which constituted an absolutely lethal injection, pronounced Ambrosius reflectively, pointed to a medical man. He added something voluntarily.

“The whole method of the suicide, as it has been described, is typical of a medical man’s suicide,” he said, with a ruminating expression. “A hypodermic syringe and 0.2 gr. morphia—that is the typical doctor’s suicide. The Willfüer would most certainly have managed things differently.”

“Really! I am amazed to hear that a thing like this

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can be separated into faculties. And how would a chemist do it?" asked the magistrate, eager to add something to his professional knowledge.

"The chemist," said Ambrosius, looking at the palms of his hands—"the chemist has an astonishing and extraordinarily rapid way of achieving his demise. The chemist takes a beaker, puts some cyanide of potassium in it, dissolves it in water and adds a little hydrochloric acid. This forms prussic acid. The chemist now makes a minute wound in his finger—a tiny scratch or cut—and puts his finger in the solution. Death comes in one second. It is far the best way . . ."

"Very interesting," said the magistrate.

He felt a little uncomfortable. It seemed to him that Ambrosius had something mad, something pathological, in his glance and bearing. He was gradually losing all desire to pursue this troublesome Willfüer case, with which he had been saddled by the Public Prosecutor.

"Many thanks. *Auf wiedersehen!* I am much obliged to you. Most interesting, really."

Ambrosius left the building, stood about in the streets, went on to the bridge and gazed at the river. He had thrown away his keys. He could not work any more. His strength had deserted him. How patient such a river was, flowing along every day into eternity in its unchanging bed. Man had greater opportunities, change was permitted to him. He could change himself from a human being into a little heap of organic substances. He could oxydise in this way or that. Breathing in itself was pleasant enough, but the oxydisation of decay had its attraction too, viewed from the standpoint of the materials. And finally the oxydisation would reach its climax. One allowed oneself to be burned in a comfortably equipped crematorium and became a little H_2O and CO_2 —a little water and carbon dioxide.

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Ambrosius grinned. The trend of his thoughts, which professionally considered were very shoddy, pleased him. He turned away and made for his laboratory.

In the Chemical Institute reigned the quiet of holiday time. It was already growing twilight when Ambrosius arrived. Kränzle, whom he called, remained invisible. But he was lucky enough to find the key of the laboratory in the pocket of the dark suit which he had put on, without thinking, in honour of the legal proceedings. He turned on the light in the laboratory and strode wildly up and down a few times. Then he put on his stained, acid-eaten overall and began his experiment.

He took a beaker and threw into it a minute portion of a white substance which he took from a glass phial. He fetched an enormous bottle from a shelf, poured some of its contents into a second beaker, and stood them beside each other. He searched the table without finding immediately what he wanted and so he took a third beaker and smashed it on the stone floor. He picked up one of the fragments, and with it scratched the forefinger of his left hand, just above the first joint. He stood for a second, gloomily contemplating the little drop of blood that oozed forth. Then he poured first of all water, then the liquid over the white substance and, from the gently foaming mixture in the beaker, arose a smell of bitter almonds. This was the simplest, the quickest. As painless as a stroke of lightning and of absolute certainty. . . .

Who may look into the deepest and most secret recesses of the soul? Who may understand them, with all their troubles, their pitiful absurdities, their ridiculous evasions? Here was Professor Ambrosius, the chemist, finished with himself and life, ready and willing to make a complete change in his organic composition. There



stood the beaker in which prussic acid was forming : an absolutely certain method at his finger-tips.

Ambrosius closed his eyes, plunged his hands into his pockets and pulled out the revolver—the same with which he had fired those five boastful shots ; he placed it with a hasty and passionate movement against his right temple and at the self-same moment pulled the trigger. With a dull repercussion which brought to the scene the servant Kränzle, who had been sleeping in the basement, the bullet entered his head. . . .

It was Hörselmann, the attendant in the Anatomy class-room, who finally brought the proceedings to an end after they had dragged on for three weeks. This quiet matter-of-fact little man was able to prove beyond dispute that the medical student Fritz Rainer had always been left-handed, and that he had carried out all his experiments with his left hand. This entirely explained the fatal injection in the right arm. And thus it came about that an official visited the cell of the prisoner Willfüer and read a legal pronouncement to the effect that the case against her had been withdrawn owing to lack of evidence.

Her departure from the prison was not exactly a triumphal march. It was a fearful, tentative, estranged return to a world to which her experiences had imparted a different aspect. It was a sunny afternoon when Helene Willfüer stepped into the street. Friedel stood awaiting her at the gateway with a bunch of asters in her hand.

“Asters?” exclaimed Helene, surprised.

Yes, asters—and an autumnal chilliness in the air. The autumn holidays had already begun, the town was emptier and quieter than usual. It looked changed. So many

things had changed. Helene asked a few hesitating questions and received reserved, careful answers. Even Friedel, the young and charming Friedel, had changed considerably. She looked paler, smaller, sharper, and there was knowledge in her wide eyes.

"How is Marx?" asked Helene.

Everything was all right with Marx. He was going to Göttingen and was to stay there until he had taken his degree, it might be for two, even three, years. Friedel would wait for him until all was settled—that was what had been arranged. No fuss was made over this secret act of womanly heroism, of the saving of this life that had been in danger. The two girls kept their mouths firmly closed and were silent a little while.

"I am very grateful to you," said Friedel later on, and that was all.

And Gulrapp?

She had taken her degree and gone off to Berlin, where she hoped it would be easier to find a job, if not actually in archæology, then in something or other. . . . Plain Meier, with his blue ears, that prehistoric monument of mediocrity, he, too, had got his degree. He had been extraordinarily lucky and had found a job immediately at the Chemical Works in Darmstadt.

Kranich? Oh, no, Kranich could not be visited. A very sad and alarming thing had befallen him—a sickness that practically amounted to a hæmorrhage. He was in hospital again, sucking ice, and was not allowed to see anyone; not allowed to speak, not allowed any excitement. Poor life-loving Kranich! But the worst piece of news, a piece which Friedel broke to the saddened Helene in awkward, hesitant phrases, was about Ambrosius.

Ambrosius?

Yes, Ambrosius in a fit of depression had shot him-

self through the temples ; was still on the danger list, and, it was whispered, even if he lived, would be left blind. . . .

Helene murmured a few thanks for Friedel's asters, for coming to meet her and for her news. She kissed Friedel absent-mindedly on the forehead with cool lips, and then went to her lodgings. She sat on the edge of her bed and thought things over. She had so much to consider. Entirely alone and friendless as she was now, she would have to build up a new scheme of life. Everything seemed to her at the moment cold and soulless. Later, the widow Grasmücke appeared in her room and gave her lodger notice. She was very excited and called the incident at the old Berghof a tragedy and the arrest a scandal. But all the same she gave notice to quit, and justified her action by leaving a few newspaper cuttings for Helene to read. But Helene did not read them. She just sat there, her hands clasped round her knees, listening to herself. Down inside there was something living, growing, wanting to be loved, begging with tiny, stirring limbs for warmth and affection.

But one could not go on sitting on the edge of a bed for ever ; it was no use expecting from the outside world the peace and seclusion of the prison. . . . Helene Willfüer pulled herself together and made up her mind. She could not stay there any longer. She had become an object of public curiosity. She could feel the looks, the words, the thoughts which followed her whenever she showed herself. She had a short talk with the Beadle, who was so wise that the students' union had conferred on him the title of "*Geheimrat*" *honoris causa*. Yes—even that experienced creature advised her to change her university. He believed that the Dean would advise her to do so in any case. Besides, what good were the lecture-room and the laboratory, now that they were

deprived of Ambrosius' forceful and stimulating personality? . . .

Helene wrote a few letters; withdrew her small balance from the bank and packed her trunk, the same old student's trunk of black wood with which her father had gone to the university. She paid a farewell visit to the hills above the town, on a blue, misty, autumn day, and meditated on it all—the whole view over the town, the river and the bridge; all that she had experienced, had suffered, had survived. She was not at all sentimental, scarcely even sad. She thought a little, quietly and resignedly, of Rainer and a great deal, anxiously, of Ambrosius, who was still fighting death. She sensed this, too, the fall, the fight and the darkness in which he lay. It had been a great and decisive shock that this tower of a man, of such character and determination, could be broken by such a trifle as love was after all. She picked a few flowers, campanulas, bracken and red bramble shoots, made two bunches and sent them both into the white rooms of the hospital, one to Kranich, one to Ambrosius.

"Helene Willfürer, . . . *p.p.c.*" was written on the conventional visiting-card with which she took her leave.

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Dear Kranich,—No, you must not worry about me. You are to lie quietly on your verandah and get well. And you are not to talk of helping me, we must agree on that once and for all. Don't imagine that it is foolish pride which makes me tell you that I can win through without help, that I must win through. That is how I feel, and I must stick to it. I must prove to myself now that I have the strength within me to face life alone and on my own responsibility. If I cannot—then it won't matter very much if I do come to grief. Help would soften me and spoil me. You know what our wise

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poet said : " Hard conditions are favourable conditions." Let us both follow that maxim, you, who are not having an easy time, dear Kranich, and I, who must first prove that I have the courage to live, since I have run away from death.

No more to-day. I have not yet found a room ; am writing on a seat in the English Garden. Keep cheerful, get well. On this October day a lovely summer sun is shining ; is it snowing on your hill-top yet ?

Always your,

Helene Willfüer.

Yes, dear Kranich, I shall be very pleased to write to you regularly about my life here, and it will help me to clear things up for myself. Everything is running smoothly now. I have enrolled myself as a student and attend lectures and work in the laboratory. Things are not quite so dirty and dilapidated here, but otherwise there is little difference. The town is large, the students do not play an important part, and one seems to have plenty of time. The lecturer, Geheimrat Brokhaus, is, of course, not to be compared with Ambrosius, but he is a live wire all the same. He is a sharp little man with a wedge-shaped beard, as though carved out of wood. When he speaks the beard moves up and down, up and down ; it makes you think of a parade ground. His pet hobby is aromatic compounds, and he delivers his main lecture at seven in the morning, which the students have to endure, with groans and grumbles. I myself am living fairly far out and as I cannot afford a tram-car, it means getting up every day at five, for I cannot miss my exercises and splashings in the morning without my work suffering the whole day. But, after all, getting up early becomes a habit, and since, considered from the absolute point of view, there is no such thing as time, I

do not get up at any definite time, *ergo* it is neither early nor late, and I have no right to feel sleepy. A little less pleasant is the "condition"—to put it briefly. The "condition" is beginning to be noticeable, although I can hide my unshapeliness to a certain extent in my good old brown coat and in my laboratory overall. But the sun brings it to light, and therefore they know now what is the matter with me. You know what students are, dear Kranich; you know that a student with child is just a perfectly absurd idea, and perhaps you can picture to yourself how they treat me, from the attendant up to the Professor. I am living in a kind of vacuum, in liquid air or solid carbonic acid. It is a climate which doesn't exactly soften the soul. But I'm sticking it, that is the chief thing. Yes, and now for the worst of it, the thing which really gave me a nasty jar: I must begin a different thesis for my degree, quite a new one and right from the beginning. I must give up all I did with my azido-succinic acid—all the nice little results which were so difficult to discover. I must begin right at the beginning and must build up something quite fresh. I knew more or less that a change in universities would probably necessitate this, but all the same it did upset me rather, like an unexpected nasty shock. Well, this time it's to be a synthesis of pyrazol derivatives, and heaven help me to get a move on! I have lost a lot of time, precious, irreplaceable time; for I am not a May Kolding who can prolong her sessions just as she pleases. I have the fantastic hope that I may get my degree by exerting ferocious energy before—before I must go into the clinic. But I must not be impatient, otherwise I'll spoil everything. Patience is the first virtue of the chemist, and one successfully concluded experiment, one resolved solution, makes up for a hundred things gone wrong. One doesn't help matters in the least by smashing the retort and rushing to the café

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as the person opposite me does. I always have the most horrible creature in the whole laboratory opposite me. This one is not called Strehl, but Bodrum ; but he is just the same, nothing but love affairs, beer, duelling, amorous adventures, related in a very loud voice and not always pleasant to listen to. Next to me works a very diligent little person—Morgenthau by name. Something very repressed, very shy, with bad teeth, nice eyes and covered with spots. Looks as though he were entirely composed of suppressed complexes. He is a member of a rabid Zionist union and wants to go to Haifa later on. I don't know what Haifa is and dare not ask. He trusts me and I him. We occasionally exchange a few words, poor fish that we are. Apart from this I am living buried in the desert with nobody near me. And I don't want anyone.

I was so pleased to hear that you were better. We must have courage, we too, dear Kranich, and be thick-skinned and patient. You know that lizards grow another tail in place of one that has been torn off? There's a little of this lizard strength in us, too, and we will renew ourselves as best we can. I must go to bed, my eyes won't keep open.

Your Helene Willfüer.

How inquisitive you have become, dear Kranich, lying on your couch up there amid the snow in the thin, rarefied air. How am I living? what do I eat? the state of my finances? Well, if it helps you to while away the time, I will gladly tell you all about it. I'm not exactly living in a palace, as you can imagine. I am living out in Schwabing with a Baronin. I do not know what sort of a Baronin she is. She has visitors in the evening and sings songs to the lute. In the mornings she is invisible. And she looks like a charwoman. She has hundreds of tiny

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curls, screws up her mouth into a little button when she talks and paints red cheeks in quite the wrong places on her face. Altogether she reminds me of a crumpled paper napkin—she even has something of the rustle and spottiness. The widow Grasmücke was more to my taste. My room is scantily furnished—iron bedstead, table, chair, cupboard, washstand—more or less the same as it was there. But the window, my beloved flower and wistaria-embowered window, is missing. Actually, I haven't really got a window here at all, only a small ventilator. But I am not at home much and my hole is a cheap one. I feed a great deal in the refectory, and in the evenings I scrape something together for myself. My finances? That is a sad story, if not completely desperate. Help me to reckon things out, dear Kranich!

I have set aside, not to be touched, five hundred marks for the expenses of the examination for my degree, the printing of the dissertation, etc. Those five hundred marks, therefore, are not to be reckoned with at all. Lecture fees, my bench in the laboratory, and work materials for this session have all been paid. The same sum of two hundred marks must be set aside for the next session. What will happen after that I do not know. It is curious, but all my thoughts only reach as far as the time when—when I shall have the child. The way does not reach any further for the moment. If I subtract just the expenses of this and the next session, then I possess about three hundred marks between life and death. The account shows a deficit, as they always say in newspaper reports and budget debates—turn it about as I will. It's the beginning of November. In three months' time I shall have to go into the clinic. If I manage to fight my way through till then—what will happen afterwards? Yes, what will happen afterwards? Mustn't think, mustn't reckon, mustn't grumble. Just work. A woman


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doctor once said to me : " You must not be afraid ; you must hope ! " Those words sank into me at the time without bearing fruit. Now, just recently, they have come up again. I am not afraid, Kranich, I hope. If you were a woman I could perhaps tell you how I feel. But being ill has sharpened your sensibilities, made you soft-hearted (can one call it that ?) and I must talk to somebody about it. I love this unborn child already. Yes, Kranich, I love it. It is living within me in a tender way that makes me indescribably happy. I am never alone now, lonely creature that I am, and I will never be alone any more. Do you know what that means to me ? Recently I went into the Pathological Institute and looked at the little embryos which sit or float so quietly in jars of spirit. How marvellously they are formed, those little creatures. How their minute limbs strive towards development, formation and perfection. It was a long, very quiet hour that I spent there. For the first time for a long time Rainer's picture was very clear and near. I can only think of him as I saw him the last time—dead. So purified of all superfluities, so very much himself in a higher sense, the achieved ideal as it were of his soul. We are faced with two great possibilities : Death and Birth. And I, the mother, am filled with emotion, torn both ways.

I am philosophising and talking big words. I am sitting on the edge of my bed, watching my porridge which will not boil. We will be humble, Kranich, and patient.

Your Helene W.

Dear Friend,—I must first of all give you my new address, for I am no longer living with my Baronin, but out in the Winzerer Strasse. Reason : I was just shot out, with insulting and harsh references to my immoral condition and the offence which it caused. No, I do not

belong to the old aristocracy, it seems. I have got over feeling hurt on this point. If one is going to have a child, as I am, then there are only two possibilities. One is either ashamed—or one is proud of it. I—am proud. Tell me, dear Kranich, that I have a certain amount of right to be so? Sometimes I think of young mothers who nestle like warm and broody birds in their nests, with footstools and cushions for their backs and tit-bits and pink muslin and solicitous husbands. And if I am not to become bitter and envious, then I must rely on my own resources and be proud. I am earning my baby, I am fighting for it, suffering for it. Sometimes I have as great a feeling of strength in me as if I were the fat woman at the October fair. It is curious, I seem to tell you more and more about the child and less and less about my work. Do not imagine that I am lazy. On the contrary I am working with a kind of feverishness, often I don't have any lunch, but stick in the laboratory until the last minute. My pyrazol derivatives give rise to knotty problems, and the Geheimrat has not made them too easy for me. But I'll manage it, I'll manage it. Last week, I was stuck, couldn't do anything, one experiment after another going wrong, and I felt as if my head was all the time up against a wall. And see—now the wall has given way and my head has gone through. I can see daylight in my work. All the same—I shan't be finished before February. Time flies, flies. Sometimes I look at the little hour-glasses that we use in the laboratory and marvel. The sand runs so slowly and thinly through them and yet time flies away with me like a bolting horse. And I am beginning to become a public eyesore, a waddling unpleasantness, a scandal for the whole Institute. Every day I expect the Geheimrat to forbid me to attend the lectures and the practical work in this condition. He always looks me up and down with such fierce eyes

when he inspects my work, and then everything becomes very quiet, all the neighbouring tables stop working and watch me and the Geheimrat. He isn't exactly talkative. If everything is all right then he says "Mhm." If it is not right, he says "Hm." But he helps me all the same. He has a crooked forefinger on which hairs grow and he taps something or other with this and roars some advice: "melting point should be  $230^{\circ}$ ," or "solution in glacial acetic." And so one progresses a little. When it is over, without my having been thrown out, my knees are quite wobbly for half an hour afterwards. And little Morgenthau next to me says, "You see, it's all right. You see, he praised you." Oh! and then I can't help thinking of Ambrosius; what a personality he was, what a teacher, what he meant to me and to all of us!

Stop! I say "was" as though this were an obituary. But he is still alive. I had news from Friedel Mannsfeldt that they say he is quite blind in one eye and that the other is still in great danger. I cannot bear to think of such a man having to lead such a broken, shattered life. I dare not think of it, it makes me lose my courage and become weak. It's a good thing that I have no time for day-dreams and sentimentalising.

And now I will just tell you quickly how I am living, for that has its amusing and pleasant sides. I am living in a room which I cannot determine crystallographically, for it is composed of a series of triangular surfaces and yet it is not a tetrahedron. The floor is a triangle, the ceiling is a slightly smaller triangle, the walls are sloping and also triangular, and the whole is put together in an eccentric way with corners and alcoves. This three-cornered room is a piece partitioned off from a studio. In the studio live two people, probably unmarried, and I have no moral qualms to fear from them. The man is a painter, but he never paints. The woman has something

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to do with dancing or eurhythmics of the Steiner school. Sometimes when I get home a bevy of queer creatures are drifting about in the studio. My room has one advantage: it costs next to nothing. I have undertaken to keep the studio in order (a duty which does not seem to be in the eurhythmic woman's line) and for this I am allowed to inhabit the triangle.

Its drawback is that there is neither stove nor chimney, nor any possibility of fitting up any form of heating. Out of sheer kind-heartedness they have laid a hot pipe from the kitchen through here to the studio, but that isn't particularly satisfactory. I have never been spoilt, but now my theoretical work for the dissertation is beginning, and I often sit up at nights writing, and it is mighty cold, especially as I—once again—have no window, but only a very porous skylight in the roof of the triangle. I put on everything I possess, wrap the bed-cover round my legs, and then it's more or less bearable, apart from stiff hands. I do not live here alone, for a mouse shares the room with me. She is very "coquette" and is called Mathilde. At least I assume she is a lady, for often there is something just too motherly in her glance and behaviour. At first she was shy, but now we are good friends. Sometimes she sits on the table and helps me to think and work. Occasionally I see us in a kind of mental mirror and it all seems quite fantastic and unreal. Do such things really exist nowadays, as a person living in a partition and working at night by candle-light unknown to anybody but a mouse? Or are there thousands of such cases, now and always, of such mute and repressed spiritual loneliness? We must not imagine that we are at all out of the ordinary, you, little Mathilde Mouse, and I.

Helene Willfüer.

Tell me that I am brave, will you, dear friend? Tell

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it me. That gives one a sense of duty—strengthens one a little again. Yes, I am brave and since I have undertaken this life, and made it so difficult for myself, then I must see it through. Enough ! It is the small tragedies which make one faint-hearted, the silly little things which seem to affect us mortals as though they were the blows of destiny. It is the toothache which one cannot have attended to because it would cost money ; the worn-out soles of one's shoes that never go to the cobbler because one only possesses one pair : the lining of one's coat—torn, mended, torn, mended—and finally ripped out altogether. The seams that give way, the sleeves that wear thin, the frayed fingers of one's gloves, the empty ink-bottle, the soap which has to be used sparingly. It is a miserable day to-day—a north wind, snow mixed with rain. A hopeless melody is whistling through the triangle. It is worse to be cold than to be hungry. I can testify to that from my own experience. Sometimes I wonder : whatever sort of child will it be that is developing under such conditions, under such strivings—deprivation, perplexity, weariness and torment ? Will it be a poor, weakly, sickly creature, in whom all the bitterness that I endeavour to overcome has concentrated ? That would be dreadful. That would be the worst of all. And then again I picture my child in the flame of the candle, on the wooden walls of my box : a boy with deep, strong eyes, large and full of strength and courage, an iron creature, a giant. Have you heard anything of Ambrosius ?

By the way, may I announce the cheerful news that Mathilde has established her femininity and has set up her nursery in an old slipper ? She is suckling six rosy, minute little mouselings, and she looks at me confidently and trustingly. God help me to find you enough nourishment for your six children, little comrade and sister.

H. W.

No, dear Kranich, my dear, good friend, not even yet ! I have not yet been humbled so much that I could or would accept help. I am standing in the ring and must win or go down alone. No third person may gain an advantage for me in this fight that I must wage with life. I am ashamed that I should have been so overcome by depression as to allow myself to send off such a miserable wail of a letter. Everything is quite all right and quite in order. It is no tragedy to have to put up with cold feet. I am still well, I can still stand the stuffy atmosphere and the work in the laboratory—and my work is progressing. I have moments of extraordinary enlightenment which carry me on with a rush. And the Geheimrat——

But that is a story in itself, a story that has a bad beginning but which ends well. For it is a fact that one has no conception of brutality until one has experienced it oneself. And though the atmosphere about me may have been cold and mocking and full of thorns, I had always imagined that a pregnant woman was unassailable. But I was mistaken : my *vis-à-vis*, Herr Bodrum, encouraged by a morning pint of ale, permitted himself brutalities of such a kind as I would never have believed possible. One is strangely defenceless against things of that sort. I cannot settle a dispute with a fellow student on the duelling-ground, and I did not want the scandal of a box-on-the-ears in the laboratory, so I laughed—although I was nearer crying. All of a sudden there was a smashing and crashing about the table. Morgenthau, the little man from Haifa and Jerusalem, turned berserk. People looked up, rushed up and pushed the two men outside to the particular place where disputes are usually settled. Afterwards all sorts of things happened : Bodrum's refusal to fight with a Jew, a Court of Honour, tumult, strife, political excitement. The whole laboratory was involved and could talk of nothing else. And me in the

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middle of it all, so remote from all such things, so unsuitable in my present condition to be the centre-point of an affair of honour ! Finally, the duel took place, and the two of them came back with sewn-up heads. After that it was not very comfortable at our bench. And finally I was summoned to the presence of the Geheimrat. I felt very sick, my heart seemed to be everywhere except in its right place. At first he growled at me, and then he gave me to understand that I should " not come back to the laboratory until the whole rotten business was over." He used the actual expression " rotten business " without any intention of hurting my feelings, I think. Well, what I feared had happened. I do not know where I got the courage from, but I began to talk and told him all about my position and experiences. At first I stood in front of him with shaking knees, and then the Geheimrat brought me a stool and sat down beside me, and when I had finished talking, he would not look at me, but looked into the eyepiece of his colorimeter and simply said : " For heaven's sake, carry on with your work as long as you can. You shall not have anything more to put up with. I'll look after you." Next day, during the inspection, they all stopped working at the other tables, listening for what might be coming next, and for a few minutes I felt pretty queer. I saw their faces through a mist like caricatures and the whole involved mixture of tubes and pipes and glasses and a thousand things grew quite strange and uncanny. And then the Geheimrat said aloud —pointing at me with his crooked finger—" Up to now I have never given a damn for women's work. Hm. But your work, that's getting on. Hm. My congratulations, *Frau Willfürer* ! "

Yes. And since then things have been all right in the laboratory and I am treated like a human being. The life is all right. I have a nice warm stove-pipe which goes

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right through my room. The eurhythmic lady has put out a plate of herring salad as a surprise for me, and Mathilde is sitting on the palm of my left hand. I can feel her little heart beating with confidence and yet poised for flight. Do you know the indescribable feeling of well-being that comes when one has been able to break through one's circle of loneliness and reach out to another creature? I have become very egoistic, but do not think less of me for that reason. You are now almost well again and do not need my sympathy any more, whereas yours for me is becoming more and more indispensable. If you hear how Professor Ambrosius is getting on, be sure and write to me at once.

Your Helene.

Dear Kranich, dear, good friend,

I am sitting like a child in front of the Christmas presents you sent me, laughing and crying—yes, stubborn and hard-bitten creature that I am, I am crying big fat tears of emotion and gratitude. What on earth put the blessed idea into your head of giving me all the little articles of clothing that I have been worrying about so bitterly? Can a man possibly know what it means to unfold such tiny vests—to wonder at them, to touch them? It makes it all a living warm reality already. I can imagine the tiny kicking limbs in the little jackets and wrappings. I am absurdly happy.

I have not written to you for a long time. Forgive me; I have had a bad time to get through, and I have built a hard shell about me, and have crouched within it silently and remotely, like a mussel. Now it is all over and—as is so often the case—something beautiful and happy has grown out of the struggle. Let me confess and tell you all about it.

Do you know the conditions under which a destitute,



unmarried creature is allowed to have a child? Those conditions are a mixture of great benevolence and great hardness. Six weeks before the confinement one may enter the clinic and one may stay there with one's child for six weeks after its birth. That is very good. But during those weeks one has to serve as material for study, one has to be at the disposal of the students; one does not even have the hour of one's confinement to oneself, and this is—even though it may be necessary—unbearably cruel. At any rate I was horrified when this prospect unfolded itself before me, and I will not tell you into what depths of despair I was plunged for some time. The angel who saved me and took pity on me was a man whom I had often noticed in the street, and who spoke to me one day. He looks like a Chinaman, this man; large, bony, with slanting eyes, broad spreading nostrils and a wide slash of a mouth, almost without lips. He wanted to paint me, this man said, and immediately offered me money—five marks an hour.

“Me? Paint me? Just like this?”

“Yes, just like that,” said my Chinaman. He was looking for a virgin mother. He wanted to paint the Madonna with her blessed burden before Jesus was born, looking in fact, just like me. At first I had to laugh. I saw myself in my miserable old brown coat, with my dirty lab. overall, and my rain-spotted felt hat and my worn shoes. You must know that I look appalling—thin, work-worn and yellowish-pale from all the chemical vapours, and owing to my thinness my body looks so out of proportion, with the restless, unruly child that I bear within me. Yes, it was just this very thing, said my artist—Dartschenko is his name—my thin, clearly modelled and haggard appearance, that had caught his eye. Very well, I asked for time to think it over, made a note of his address, wandered about like a lost soul for a few days—it seemed

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to me as though I were about to sell my child—went to his studio and said I was ready. What else was there left for me to do?

There was another blow waiting for me. He must paint me in the nude, said the artist, that was the whole idea—the naked virgin striding over a ploughed March field.

I am neither entirely shameless, nor do I think I am at all a prude, but I was very shocked. I went back to my triangular room and crouched there and brooded and weighed it all up and did not know what to do. Was it easier to stretch oneself out for the benefit of students, no better than a guinea-pig or an experimental mouse? Or was it easier to stand naked before this stranger and earn money with my thin pregnant body? At that time, during those days, it was all up with me. I gave up trying to work, gave up everything, I couldn't see my way at all. I became strangely light-headed through having nothing to eat. There is a peculiar kind of intoxication which comes over one when one is half-starved, and in this dancing and completely confused condition I set off one day and brought my decision to my artist. I took off my things behind a screen. I was very cold and was shivering against my will. I seemed to myself to be indescribably ugly and distorted, and that made my shame as biting as the cut of a whip. The artist seemed to be excited, his nostrils were trembling. I was immeasurably afraid. But I did not understand him then. I did not realise the fever of work that he exuded. I stood for a long time then; for more than an hour. I felt very strange, I cannot describe it. I understood all the torments and persecutions of the Saints, all the martyrdoms of the Calendar at once. I felt the stigmata on my body. It seemed as though I must begin to bleed from internal wounds. Yes, that is how it seemed. I am

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forced to use such strong words even though they sound in bad taste. My Chink, whom I only saw as through a veil, moaned and groaned and sprang at his easel and smote at it with his brush as with a sword. We were both drunk then, I only grasped that later, I with hunger and he with creative work. In the end, I fell down in a faint.

That was the lowest point that my existence has yet touched, and since then everything has been getting better. When this fainting fit, this little god-sent unconsciousness was over, I was lying on a bed, was being looked after, fed, comforted, understood and protected with every human kindness. This Dartschenko is a wonderful person. One of those saintly, broad, good, Russian people, whom I had only met in books up to then and had never quite believed in. Since then these sittings have been like an asylum. I am so cared for, so soothed while I am allowed to be in the studio. He has a lame wife. Sometimes he carries her up the stairs, and then she sits silently and watches. She has the most beautiful hands I have ever seen and is very kind to me. The picture that Dartschenko is painting is going to be wonderful. It is more than a picture to me. It is helping me to build myself up again and have confidence in myself. I tell him of my life, and it seems to be so simple, so natural, so right in his eyes.

At the bottom of it all, we are children of good fortune, we two, although we do seem to be a bit disinherited just now. Isn't that so, dear Kranich? Now you are back home again, I can see you so distinctly as you stand bent over books in the golden slant of sunny dust particles that is always streaming through your shop. Are you glad? Are you savouring to the full your return to health? It is so good that we are still alive, both of us; for to us that is, after all, not just something to be taken for granted, but a real experience. Isn't that so?

Think kindly of me when my hour comes, which will be soon. I am homesick for you to-day, for the town, for my room, for the lecture-rooms there. I would like to know if the bells in the Jesuit church are ringing now, the ones I always heard in prison. And I would like to know if there is a light in the villa on the Klingenbergweg. Christmas is a sentimental time. My landlords are playing on a borrowed gramophone some dreadful seasonable songs. Mathilde has kept away to-day with her whole family. And I am sitting in front of the little garments and I feel like a tough piece of leather that is being beaten soft by a patient, patient Master.

Your Helene.

Let us try to picture Helené Willfüer as she was at that period of her life. Let us picture her as the artist Dartschenko saw her, March furrows beneath her naked feet, small, virginal and yet pregnant, with the delicate halo of pain about her tight-drawn face. Let us imagine her following her path unerringly, without sleep, without nourishment, without substance, driven to the limits of human endurance. Can we glimpse her personality, mirrored in the noble and the ordinary people among whom her path lay—her solitary, cold and perilous path? Do we fear lest she succumb to all that awaited her—for she had not yet reached the depths of her need, she had not yet withstood the worst—or have we faith in the tough, patient, proud and humble strength of her kind? Surely it must be with a sense of pleasure and of wonder that we meet her again, meet her again more than a year later in an unexpected place, in our town, in the town with the castle, the river, the hills and the old Alma Mater?

She wore on that day a washed-out, skimpy frock. She was leaving sick-room No. 57 in the clinic reserved for

consumptive patients. She drew the white-enamelled double doors carefully behind her and went to the nurse on duty, who was sitting in the corridor busy with a case-sheet.

"Herr Kranich has gone to sleep, Sister," she said. "I have something most important to do. When he wakes up, tell him, please, that I have gone to Professor Ambrosius."

"Are you coming back again this evening? He usually gets very restless about six o'clock," asked the sister.

"Yes, I'll come without fail. I will hurry," Helene answered and went her way. She carried her small hat in her hand, and as she stepped out of the gateway of the clinic she stood still for a second and breathed deeply. Why, the chestnuts are flowering again, she thought, and within her there was a great wonder at the unconquerable recurrence of sun, blossoming and life.

She made her way through the gardens and then uphill, sometimes hesitating, sometimes urged forward, by strangely mixed feelings of fear and pleasure. Her heart was beating absurdly as she pulled the bell at the garden gate and long-forgotten things surged up as distinctly and clearly before her eyes as they sometimes do in dreams. She saw the brass plate with the well-known name again, the shoe-scraper, the carving over the entrance door which pictured Eurydice between Orpheus and Eros. She even recognised the face of the parlour-maid—all of them things that had lain treasured and hidden away within her. There was the familiar smell of the staircase, the sound of the door opening, and then Helene Willfüer was standing with bated breath in a dark room in which something was moving.

She did not understand immediately. She did not grasp at once that it was Ambrosius who rose from an

arm-chair in the background and came towards her—or rather came towards the noise which had been occasioned by the opening door.

“Herr Professor, here is Fräulein Doktor Willfür,” announced the parlour-maid, reading from the visiting-card and making a slight, explanatory gesture from the Professor to Helene. Then the door was closed again and the darkness became more intense. With dilated pupils Helene recognised the library, the book-shelves, the wide table on which lay the old Lutheran Bible beside a few magazines. A dim green light, moved by the gently stirring leaves, filtered through the cracks of the closed shutters. Ambrosius was wearing a shade over his eyes, his brow had become bald, his face slack and wrinkled. He stood up, hugely tall beside his arm-chair, held an uncertain hand out before him and lifted his head with an expression of listening and waiting.

“How do you do, Herr Professor,” said Helene, deeply moved and noticing too late that her voice was hoarse. She cleared her throat and clenched her teeth. This was Ambrosius, this was Ambrosius now. . . .

“How do you do, Frau Kollegin,” he said, and smiled in the direction from which her voice had come. “It is very kind of you to look me up so quickly. Won’t you sit down?” As he said this, he motioned in a direction where there was no chair. He himself felt his way round his writing-desk, knocking down a book, and finally found a chair into which he sank after feeling over its back.

“Thanks, thanks,” he said, “I don’t see very well. That makes things a little difficult sometimes. And you are well?”

“Thank you, Herr Professor,” said Helene, not daring to look at him. He felt about a little in front of him and found a cigar and matches and began to smoke. “Book-

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seller Kranich told me that I might look you up, Herr Professor," said Helene constrainedly.

"Yes. He has played courier between us sometimes, giving me your greetings and keeping me posted with your news. I congratulate you on having taken your degree."

"Thank you."

"Well, and when Bookseller Kranich told me that you were coming here, I asked to see you. I would like to discuss professional matters with you. Are you staying here for some time?"

"That does not depend on me, Herr Professor. Kranich asked me to come. He even sent me the money for the journey: I am living with his mother. I shall not be able to leave until it, until he—— He is very ill. He is only being kept alive with oxygen."

"Oh, really? I am sorry. And does he know——?"

"I'm not quite sure about that. He does not talk of himself. He is very attached to life, very——"

"Yes, we all are. Isn't that so?" said Ambrosius, lifting his head and smiling. There was a sudden intimacy and warmth in the gesture, and in the expression of his shaded face.

"Yes," said Helene softly, gently moving her fingers. She seemed to be so shut in by the twilight of this room, by the blindness, the tentative feeling, the wreckage: while outside the bright early summer sun was casting its brazen reflections over town and river.

"You were kind enough to send me your dissertation. Unfortunately, I have not yet been able to read it," said Ambrosius, sitting there so blind in his darkened room, with the shade over his damaged eyes. "What did you work on?"

"It was only an experiment on the Synthesis of Pyrazol Derivatives. Brokhaus suggested the subject."

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"I see. When did you take your degree?"

"At the end of last year's summer session. It will be a year in August."

"Bookseller Kranich told me that you were not able to find a job for a long time. Have you got one now?"

"Yes, or rather something of the sort. It does at any rate support us."

"What is it? What are you doing? Commercial?"

"Commercial!" said Helene, and was forced to laugh. "No, Herr Professor. I am living in Brunsdorf now. That is a tiny place in Hanover. In Brunsdorf there are engineering works, a railway station, a doctor, a chemist and nothing else. In the chemist's shop there is a cellar, in the cellar there are three bottles of Bertrand's reagent. That is all. I sit there and make examinations of urine for the people of Brunsdorf."

"Well, there was no need for you to have studied chemistry to do that," said Ambrosius impatiently.

"No, indeed," said Helene without bitterness.

A little column of ash fell from Ambrosius' cigar on to the back of his hand which was lying on the writing-desk. He jumped, scattered the ash over his books and files, groped about—it was a distressing sight. Helene pushed an ash-tray in the way of his fingers. "Where—oh, there it is. I couldn't see it immediately," said Ambrosius, putting away his cigar. He went on:

"I asked you to come and see me because it is possible that I know of a job for which you would be very suitable. It is not altogether a simple matter. But you must tell me a little more in detail how you have fared since—we last met. Character is almost as important as ability in this particular instance. I thought perhaps that you, particularly you, might be as tough, as obstinate and as patient as would be necessary. I feel in a way that I must make amends to you and all my students for the mess



my illness made of your affairs. You must begin right at the beginning."

"Well, nothing came of the Azido-succinic acid. But I should have had to change my university in any case just at that time, Herr Professor."

"Ah, that's true. We have both made rather a mess of things, my dear colleague. But there is something human in that, too, you see—to miss the mark on such a big scale, so very thoroughly. I have never thought much of correctness. The chief thing is to accept what comes to one with decency," he said, laughing, and a little more like the old Ambrosius. "Well, now you must go through an examination. State the previous history of your life, as they say on official forms."

"There is not very much to tell, Herr Professor. I went to Munich, worked with Brokhaus, took my degree *summa cum laude*. Was without a job from August to November, was engaged as a laboratory assistant by Werner and Höhne, but soon got the sack. . . ."

"Why?"

"Because I have a child, Herr Professor. You know they are very strict about such things in these concerns."

"Is your child with you or is it in a home?"

"For the first six months it was in a children's home. Now it is with me. It can already walk. It is a very sweet child, Herr Professor. I simply could not part with it. I must tell you that at once, because of the job that you may have in mind for me. I know that I am making things more difficult for myself by this, but it is a point about which I am quite determined. I can't help it," said Helene, twining her fingers within one another in the depth of her emotion. Ambrosius listened to her voice. He smiled open-mouthed, with the upturned face of the deaf and the blind.

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"What a pity it is so dark here. I should like to have seen if you have changed," he said, almost against his will. In silence he groped for another cigar and after some trouble arranged everything in its place and smoked expectantly. Helene was silent. "And then?" asked Ambrosius.

"There is nothing more, Herr Professor. Now I am in Brunsdorf as something less than a laboratory servant with a pittance of a salary. I haven't seen a real laboratory since I took my degree."

"Not seen a laboratory! Yes, I know how that feels. It's the smell of it, isn't it? One is homesick for the dreadful, unavoidable smell of the laboratory—chlorine—sulphuretted hydrogen—eh? One dreams of it—you, too?"

Helene did not answer. Her throat was filled with a bitter taste. The thin green shaft of light through the shutters was paling already. The palest of reflections caught the great curve of Ambrosius' bare forehead.

"You aren't exactly talkative, Fräulein Willfüer," he said disappointedly. "I can see the main points, but what I want, what interests me, is the way between. I would like to know the difficulties you had to overcome. The unsuccessful experiments interest me just as much as the successful ones. Surely you remember that from the old days. It's beginning afresh, patiently beginning afresh, that makes a chemist—and a man, too."

"The way between?" said Helene, leaning forward and closing her eyes in thought. Now she was in complete darkness, like Ambrosius, and pictures sprang into relief against the blackness. "Do you want me to tell you that my pains came in the midst of my work, in the middle of the laboratory? They began a fortnight too soon. I had hoped all along to have finished the experimental material for the dissertation first. But they began in the

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middle of the laboratory. I turned out my Bunsen burner and went out. Then my neighbour followed me, a little Jew called Morgenthau. He fetched a taxi and took me to the clinic.

"There was a sort of screen in the ward on which rubber gloves were hanging. Behind the screen a woman was still lying. She screamed dreadfully by the hour. Then there was a smell of ether, and after that all was quiet. Then I heard a child crying while I myself was having bad pains. I didn't utter a sound for the whole thirteen hours. They don't like it in the clinic if the women scream. There were twelve women in the ward, each of whom had a small box at the foot of her bed with her child in it. One only sees the child oneself when one is nursing it. There were three other unmarried women beside myself in the ward. They all had visitors except me. The more visitors one had the more one was respected. We didn't play a very distinguished part, my baby boy and I.

"Ten days later I went back into the laboratory for the first time. Unfortunately, I fainted there. The lecturer was very annoyed. But later on he found me two women students whom I coached in inorganic chemistry. I had also earned and saved some money by posing for an artist. In the morning and evening I ran to the children's home and fed the child. As a result I was often absent from the most important lectures, which was very trying. For a short time, just before taking my degree, I had nothing left, absolutely nothing. During that time a friend fed me, a Russian, he paid the children's home, too, otherwise the child would have come under public care.

"That was the worst time of all. How I managed to get my degree, I simply don't know. It happened in a trance. I only know that afterwards I was sitting in the porter's room, waiting, and then I was called in and

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Brokhaus said: "I congratulate you, Frau Doktor." And then the porter held a hand out in front of me which grew larger and larger, waiting for a tip, and I hadn't a penny. I was very much ashamed then. I still had fifty marks left, for the printing of the dissertation was cheaper than I had expected. That was during the time that I was looking for a job. Twice a week the *Chemists' Gazette*, once a week the *Journal of Applied Chemistry*. Letters, offers, requests. Waiting. Waiting. This fruitless excitement was dreadfully wearing. Nothing. The fifty marks came to an end and I couldn't feed the child any more. Then Kranich got me something through influence. I wrote addresses. One doesn't earn much doing that. A pamphlet was being circulated, and then that came to an end, too. I tried to get a job as goodness only knows what—receptionist, nursemaid, saleswoman—nothing to be had. I looked so wretched and ragged at this time that no one would trust me. And on top of it all, to be pestered with this burning desire for work—real, chemical work! For a time I knitted kettle holders for the Women's Friendly Institution which took pity on me. I got six pfennigs apiece. Then that was finished, too——"

"And then——?" said Ambrosius in a questioning tone into the silent darkness.

"It sounds so silly when one describes it all. As though one wanted to brag. It all sounds so appalling. Actually it was not nearly as dreadful as it sounds. For I had the child. I was allowed to visit it twice every day. I do not know if you can imagine how one longs for that. I cannot describe it. It is a penetrating kind of joy, sometimes it almost hurts, it hurts in one's jaws, and there, in one's elbows—I am so terribly happy with my child——"

"And then——?" asked Ambrosius again. He had put his cigar away somewhere, in the middle of the baize

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covering of the writing-table, from which presently arose a smell of singeing.

"Then I got the job with Werner and Höhne, and I took the child home with me. I was lodging at that time with a tram-car conductor. His wife was very good to the child, she looked after it during the day, while I was in the factory. But then I got the sack. And then the winter came. I had to put the child in a home again. That was a hard blow. My room was too cold. At that time I used to spend all day in the library. I learnt a great deal then. I read my way through a lot. I earned a little through the Labour Exchange. Several times I served as an extra help at parties. One lady recommended me to another. I had dyed an old red frock black and had made a white apron from my old lab. coat. And funnily enough I can wait at table. I owe that to my stepmother, who was always so domesticated. I must be grateful to her for that, if for nothing else. After the New Year I got the job in Brunsdorf. It isn't too bad there. I lodge outside the village with a railway watchman, and every morning and evening I walk along the line through the woods. That is lovely—I feel its loveliness very strongly at times. I've got the child at home. The woman has a girl of seven who looks after it. Sometimes I get very frightened thinking: now the Berlin express is dashing past and the boy is playing on the line. But that is all nonsense, of course. And just recently Kranich wrote to me telling me that I must come because he was very ill—and that you wanted to see me, too. I begged for leave. I hope it won't cost me my job. But I shall win through whatever happens.

"I don't like telling you all this. I have never spoken about it," Helene added after a pause. "I am only recounting it, because you asked about the difficulties, Herr Professor. Ah, well, I've had my share of difficulties. But I could also tell you of just as many pleasant things

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belonging to this time. Of all the people I have got to know, of all the kindness, the decency and the sacrifice I have seen! The number of books I read at the time when it was too cold to sit at home! The library—that was a home in itself. Other things don't stop when things are going badly, everything is there the whole time: the sun, and the woods, and the fresh air, with the marvelous taste it has sometimes after the rain. Or when I watch the child showing its four little teeth or inventing a new word with such deep, almost holy, earnestness—then things aren't too bad for me. I haven't experienced a single day yet without some pleasure, Herr Professor, not during my whole life, that much I can say. My blackest day was the one on which I was arrested and did not feel able to face either death or life. And then suddenly a dragon-fly flew through my cell, all brilliant blue and silver. It was so beautiful that it was a miracle. It must have lost its way from the river for the special purpose of bringing me pleasure. I began to laugh even under arrest when I saw that dragon-fly. I can be immeasurably happy, Herr Professor, and that is why nothing dreadful has really befallen me yet. I really don't know why I am telling you all this. It is—you mustn't think that it is a small matter for me to see you again. But everything that has been screwed down within me has become loosened again and has just flowed away from me. I'd rather anything happened than that you should think I was complaining. Those who can bear a lot are given a heavy burden. It is just that. And thank God, I am no weakling——”

Helene's uncertain and hesitant voice rid her last sentence of all self-complacency. She stopped speaking, Ambrosius listened to the silence with open mouth yet a little longer. The cigar was out at last. He groped for something on the writing-desk, but as Helene did

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not know that it was her hands he was looking for, he did not find what he wanted and gave up his search. He got up and began to pace back and forth through the room, his head sunk on his chest. Helene followed him with nervous glances. Her heart felt very large and full of painful tenderness. For he had cried on her shoulder once, this large, broken creature. For one unforgettable short minute he had been her most intimate possession. She thought of that now. What might be going on within him at this moment was indiscernible. . . . He stood still at the back there in the alcove completely lost in the darkness.

"Yes," he said, after a little while, "now I can picture it. Now I can see you. I can see you now, Fräulein Willfür, I think you are suitable for the position that I am going to offer you. But I must tell you at once that it is the most unenviable situation in the whole of Germany. It is a job which no one up to now has been able to stand. Up to now every chemical assistant has run away from it, because they had not got the patience or endurance that was necessary. But I believe that you will manage it. Have you done any biochemistry yet? That is very important."

"A great deal theoretically. I believe I am fairly well up in it in theory. I was tremendously interested in biochemical work and articles when I was working in the library. But so far I haven't had any practical experience. But I could soon work it up if necessary."

"I think so, too. Now listen! It is in connection with Professor Köbellin—you know? The man who until recently was lecturer at the Physiological Institute. He retired a short while ago. He was over the age limit—sixty-eight. Köbellin has used the whole of his late wife's fortune to set up a private laboratory of his own. He has settled in a house in the Bergstrasse. His assistant,

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Doctor Sei Mitsuro, has stayed with him. He has got the real Asiatic patience of the Japanese—nobody else can stand Köbellin for long. I'm telling you all this beforehand. Köbellin is obsessed by an *idée fixe*—he has become a bit of a maniac in recent years. He is not very well, either, has paralysis of the nerves, a stroke or something. He himself is terribly impatient, for he is afraid he will die before he has brought his special research to a conclusion, and that seems to make him quite mad at times. But he demands the patience of an angel from his assistants. Mitsuro is doing the biological work, as far as I know—and now they want a chemical assistant. I will describe to you the sort of work they are doing as best I can."

Ambrosius came out of his corner, felt his way past Helene—and she experienced an amazing warmth and all the old intensity of feeling as his fingers brushed against her hair, before he found his seat again at the writing-desk. While his voice lectured on Köbellin's research work, Helene remembered with sorrow the lectures she had once heard him give.

"Have you been at all interested in the latest chemical advances in connection with hormones and internal secretions?" he asked suddenly, becoming the teacher again.

"I have a vague idea of it, Herr Professor. I know that it is possible to prepare a secretion of the suprarenal gland synthetically in the form of adrenalin, and also insulin from the pancreas, but that is about all. I believe I have read a report by Dr. Mitsuro, whom you mentioned, on the corpus luteum, that it had been possible to isolate a hormone here as well. But the formulæ escape my memory——"

"Well, I don't know much more myself, and I am afraid that science is still pretty much at a loss as regards the chemical factories we all carry about in

our glands. Köbellin for many years has been on the track of the reproductive glands. He began long before all the excitement about rejuvenation started and is now on the verge of a great discovery. As to what, how, why or when—he draws a veil over all that. He does not like anybody to pry into his work-rooms. As far as I have been able to find out he has found a similar kind of special group of cells in the hypophysis which give off a secretion with miraculous properties. He now wants to separate or isolate this secretion: it is rather a nebulous business altogether. At any rate, he is looking for somebody who is a proficient chemist and who is prepared to put up with his moods and help him with his work. This person must be able, to a certain extent, to submerge his own personality and to devote himself body and soul to internal secretions. This person would have to settle down in this lonely spot in the Bergstrasse, in Köbellin's private laboratory, to be at his beck and call day and night and to be content with a very small salary, for Köbellin himself has not got very much—he has invested all his money in fitting up his laboratory. I am asking you whether you would care to be this person?"

"I? Oh, Herr Professor! That is—that is such an unexpected piece of luck—I can't"—stammered Helene. She pictured retorts, glasses, tubes, flasks, a regiment of flasks, a beautiful copper centrifuge turning madly: and then across this vision of learning and work ran her small son—and everything was shattered.

"Can I have my child with me there?" she asked quickly.

"I will ask. I do not think that Köbellin would have any objection to it. He is like a little old faun. I shall have to talk everything over with him, of course. I will write and tell you the result."

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"I will write to you," were his words, although at that moment it was obvious that he could not even find his cigar-case that was lying in front of him on the writing-desk. Helene looked about her. It was quite dark now, darker than dark, even the cracks at the window admitted no more than a dull evening greyness. And Kranich, who was lying in the clinic waiting, not wanting to die——

"I must take my leave now. I must go back to my patient," she said, hurriedly, getting up. She found it difficult to go out and leave this darkened room. It had been unspeakably sad and unspeakably wonderful to see Ambrosius again. And now it was over. Heaven knew if it would happen again. "I am very grateful to you," she said politely, holding out her hand. Ambrosius had also got up, he had come close up to her: it was impossible to say whether he had done so purposely or by mistake through his blindness. Helene withdrew her gloved hand, and with a secretive movement took off her glove and laid her fingers on Ambrosius' hand which was groping in the air. Yes, it was still the same hand, the same pressure, the warmth, the skin, the same deep intimacy of long ago.

Suddenly, with her fingers in his, Ambrosius began to smile. It was now so dark that Helene could not see it, but she could feel it in the sound of his voice.

"Do you remember that in the old days you wanted to go straight ahead, straight ahead to your goal? We talked about it once. Now we two have got all kinds of bypaths behind us. You, too, Fräulein Willfür. And now you believe that with Köbellin the path will lead straight to heaven: and it will most probably be hell. Bypaths, bypaths. But it was nice of you to come and see me, Frau Kollegin. *Auf wiedersehen!* I will write to you——"

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And then Helene's hand was freed from the pressure, from the friendly warmth : the door closed behind her. The parlourmaid turned the electric light on in the hall. It struck Helene like a blow—she almost flinched. Birds were singing in the garden, the gate creaked. Water trickled in its bed among the rocks at the side of the road.

Helene suddenly closed her eyes, pressed her lips together and sank into deep darkness. She walked on like this for twenty paces, tempted, giddy, with hesitating feet. She bumped against something, stood still and, with a deep breath, opened her eyes. She was standing at a wooden railing, beneath her she saw the town as she had seen it once before, long ago, on a dying, fading evening, and above her an early moon hung in the heavens as though softly swaying in a silvern cradle. . . .

When Helene got back to the clinic the evening round was already over. Kranich had had a camphor injection a little while earlier—for his heart was in a very uncertain condition—and he looked towards her silently, but with a lucid expression, as she opened the white door. He had become very yellow, very large-eyed, all his features had enlarged in proportion as his face had shrunk together. His hand that was lying on the bed-cover was damp, but his lips were dry and cracked, and Helene first went and damped a wad of bandage and brushed it across his mouth. "How are you, Kranich?" she asked softly. Kranich, who was only able to whisper, answered: "Fine. Much better." She turned the small shaded bed-lamp away from him and sat down beside the bed. After a little while Kranich whispered something that she could not understand immediately, and she bent down nearer to him.

"Presently I shall have two hands again," he whispered. It had often happened recently that he had

uttered brief vague remarks of this sort. Helene understood him now and made a gentle conciliatory gesture. "We mustn't chatter now, we must sleep, my dear," she said. He closed his eyes and lay quiet for a time. "A drink. Sit up," he demanded presently. Helene put the feeding-cup to his mouth and propped the pillows a little higher. Immediately afterwards his lips were dry again and he sank down into the bed. The weakness and hopelessness of his condition were only too evident in the deep shadow-filled lines that ran from nose to mouth.

"Do you often think of Rainer?" Kranich whispered, and Helene found difficulty in following his wandering thoughts.

"Think? That is too definite an expression. He is always present to me. He often looks at me through Tintin's eyes," she answered slowly. Tintin was the name which her child had given himself.

"Yes," whispered Kranich and seemed content. Suddenly he began to talk, and although some consonants seemed to cause his dried-up lips a certain amount of difficulty, he was able to whisper his intention.

"The transition is very unpleasant, very," he whispered. "It is very worrying when everything hums and goes so far away. Nothing close by any more. Your hands—did you hold Rainer's at that time? Yes, mine, too. That was what I always wanted. It is only a formality. If I were to remain alive there would never have been any mention of it. But now. . . . It is not presuming. It is only a formality. To-morrow the notary is coming. My mother knows it already. It is because of Tintin. All arrangements can be settled in three days, the publication of banns and the marriage and adoption. That amount of time is still left to me. I am much better to-day. It is because of the big stones——"

Helene waited, she dampened his lips that tried to

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form a word. "What stones, Kranich?" she asked softly.

"The big stones—in your path. I can't bear that. That is why. You must say 'yes,' Helene," he whispered wearily.

Helene thought and tried to bring some order into what she had heard.

"If I understand it rightly, you want to—to give me and my child your name, so that things may be easier for us? That is very good of you. You are very good, Kranich, thank you," she said and stroked his cold, damp forehead twice.

"I'm not talking about myself," whispered Kranich, and the old familiar turn of phrase took on a marvellously touching and final meaning in his dying mouth. "Not about myself. I shan't be there any more then. Will you do it? For Tintin's sake? Yes?"

"Yes," said Helene. "Yes, dear friend. We will talk about it when you are better. Now you must rest. I will take your hand like this and be quiet now. Do you hear the bells?"

"I hear—the wings—big——" he whispered, and grew even smaller in his white hospital bed. The empty left sleeve hung so limp over the pillows. His face was covered with perspiration and looked exhausted. Later, it may have been eight o'clock, his damp, pulseless hand slipped out of Helene's fingers and began a strange, circling and regular searching over the white woollen bed-cover. Helene watched this with a saddened expression for a time. Perhaps she was thinking of other hands, seeking, blind hands scarred by a burn, or limp Gothic fingers in which snowdrops were hanging. She jumped when the white night-sister appeared in the silently opened door, and looked towards the bed. Helene threw her a questioning glance. The sister shook

her head imperceptibly, as though in negation, and disappeared. The hand, this single, lonely hand circled more restlessly over the coverlet.

"What are you doing, my friend?" Helene asked, bent close to Kranich's mouth. She could now see what difficulty his breathing gave him, weak hasty breathing between his dried lips.

"Tidy up—everything—in order—formalities," he whispered, and since he was not able to form any consonants any more, it was indistinct and unintelligible. Helene was completely enveloped in the feverish atmosphere that surrounded him, and bending close over him, she began to whisper. She saw him disappearing down a deep, dark gorge, and as she began to talk, as she spread the blessing of her lies over the dying man, she felt as though she were holding a light, as though she were guiding him in the darkness, as though she were accompanying her friend a little way on the hard and troublous path on which he was wandering with ever-shortening breath, ever-weakening pulse.

"Yes," she said, "yes, dear one. Everything shall be put in order. I should like to become your wife: not only because of the stones. Not only because of Tintin. But because I am fond of you. I am fond of you—can you hear me? I am very glad that you are so much better to-day, that you have improved so much. In three days everything will be quite different. I'm not going to let you go, I'm going to keep a tight hold on you. I am holding you, Kranich, can you feel me? You will live. We will live together. In the summer we will go to Switzerland. You must meet Tintin. For Tintin will be your child then. You will live. You want to live? Do you hear me? I am quite close to you. You will live, Kranich."

The hand on the coverlet stopped. Kranich opened his

eyes, perhaps he may even have recognised Helene's face that was bent so close over him.

"Yes. Live," he said suddenly. He said it quite loudly, clearly and distinctly, not a single consonant was missing. Then the exertion was over, and even the hand slept, whilst the high, blue veins ebbed in the transparent yellow of the flesh.

Later on the sister returned with the assistant, and the oxygen cylinder. But bookseller Kranich needed it no longer.

Tintin's world began at the house and ended at the garden wall. Everything that lay between those boundaries—grass, flower-bed, tree, animal, fountain or colour, was remote and immensely large. For instance, the four steps that led from the entrance door into the garden, which one negotiated by letting oneself down backwards to an accompaniment of grunts, were something of immeasurable height. Later on, when one was four or five years old, they shrank somewhat, and in the end one could jump them in two bounds. But the acacia which grew in front of the laboratory window remained as high as ever and continued to thrust its tip into the middle of the sky. And Herr Fabian's boots lost none of their awe-inspiring appearance, whether Herr Fabian was digging in the garden or doling out beetroot to the guinea-pigs in the cellar or tidying up secret and exciting things in the laboratories. That the Professor often shouted after Fabian "Fabian, you are a blockhead!" did not affect one atom the affectionate respect in which Tintin held this factotum. Herr Fabian had everything: he had apples, cotton, playthings and all kinds of tools. He had an old microscope which one was allowed to look through at any time, and not only—as was the case with the others—on exceptional and very special occasions. He had a

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tiny little bottle in which floated a tiny full-rigged ship. If one looked at it for a long time, the ship grew large and sailed away on a sea. And it must not be forgotten that it was Herr Fabian who had presented Tintin with the rabbit Petermann, that soft-coated, snuffling source of happiness. Herr Fabian ranked very little below God.

The devil was represented in Tintin's world by the Professor—Professor Köbellin: a most incalculably moody devil, who sometimes acted as though the garden, meadow and fountain belonged to him instead of to Tintin. Then Tintin would be fetched into the house by Frau Fabian and made to be quiet; he was not even allowed to play his whistle that Uncle Mitsuro had carved for him out of a reed. The devil rushed up and down the garden, hands clasped behind his back, his overall buttoned all wrong, and it was whispered to Tintin that the Herr Professor must have quiet in order to think things out. It was altogether rather strange in this house, as Tintin reflected with pouting lips. Sometimes everything was in a whirl, everybody busy at once and nobody with any time to spare. The Professor would rage and shout; Malee (which was the name he gave his mother), Malee would dash down the steps in a white overall, carrying four small glass tubes between her five outstretched fingers; there would be a humming in the X-ray room; through the cracks of doors one could see turning wheels, boiling, bubbling, steaming liquids in glasses; even Uncle Mitsuro would seem excited. He would come out of the basement where he had fitted up a small room for special purposes of his own and later on Herr Fabian would brush up three dead white mice and bury them in the garden. And then it would become quiet again, and they all of them would think things over, the Herr Professor, Malee and Uncle Mitsuro. Tintin would trot into the animal house and sit down beside the rabbit,


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and there whisper little stories into Herr Petermann's long ears.

But as for Herr Professor Köbellin—he was just horrid. He had white hair, through which a red skin shone, and a green beard, which he would catch up between his teeth and chew—a horrid sight. One eye was always shut which gave him a cunning expression, but was really due to the fact that he had spent his life peering through microscopes and magnifying glasses. Well, even if this innocent explanation, which originated from Herr Fabian, were correct, there still remained the horrid fact that the Professor's fingers were crooked, and that they shook violently and without ceasing, so that he was not able to grasp or show anything, but was only able to touch or knock with this distorted crumpled-up claw in a manner at once helpless and commanding. It may have been that this affliction explained why the Professor always looked so indescribably dirty. Frau Fabian gave him a freshly laundered overall every morning, but by the afternoon everything that had been within reach of the Professor was smeared all over it, and since among all the various substances blood was not the least, it was no small wonder that the Professor haunted Tintin's dreams as a dreadful, blood-thirsty monster.

But Uncle Mitsuro was different. Uncle Mitsuro's chief province was the room in the basement, the only room in this house that Tintin was never allowed to look into, not even through a crack in the door. "Why not?" he had asked Herr Fabian. "Because your mother does not wish it. Because the animal experiments are carried out there," Herr Fabian announced, and with this incomprehensible reply one had to be content. Tintin always associated this room in a dark and mysterious way with the dead mice and guinea-pigs, but his imagination

carried him no further than that. Uncle Mitsuro—gentle and white-haired,—always quiet, always smiling, always smoking cigarettes—seemed to him a good and trust-worthy friend. Whenever Uncle Mitsuro took anything in his yellow fingers one could see it. One could see the blossom with its delicate structure, one could see the moss, or the wing of a gnat, or a stone in which mica began to glimmer most wonderfully. And Uncle Mitsuro knew the names of everything; for every living thing had two names—one ordinary, everyday name and one special ceremonious name. It was great fun and quite simple, too, that the snail should also be called *Helix hortensis*, or the copper-beech near the wall *Fagus silvatica*, just as Tintin himself could also be called Valentin Willfürer if it were necessary to go into details.

If Uncle Mitsuro was a friend, then Malee was an angel. Malee was the nicest, the loveliest and the dearest creature in the world. Unfortunately, Malee had very little time to spare, but she was always there in the mornings when one woke up, and in the evenings she came again to one's bedside. Everybody in this house wore white overalls, but Malee's overall looked like an angel's raiment. Once, when Tintin was just going off to sleep, it seemed to him that Malee wore white wings, closely folded, beneath her overall. He had tried to confirm this when they bathed together in the little mountain stream, but there had been nothing to prove it.

Malee had large hands, and if one was Malee's child nothing in the world could harm one, not even the Professor. Held by Malee's hand one was sometimes allowed to leave the garden, go out through the gate in the wall, and wander through an avenue of sighing trees whose tops touched one another—they were called poplars or *Populus nigra*—one was allowed to go along the banks of the stream, past the castle ruins into the woods and there

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be happy in a most perfect and indescribable way. If Uncle Mitsuro showed one something; one could see it; but when Malee showed it one could feel it, one could become very tiny and creep inside everything, and then again become as large and strong as a fir-tree, so that one got quite close to heaven if one stretched out one's arms—just like a fairy story. Malee taught one to climb and to swim in the mountain stream and to run races and to sing in a hoarse boy's voice, and to know animals, flowers and trees, not only by their two names, but as friends: so that one knew exactly how they looked, what they liked, and how they lived. And then Malee taught one how to be quiet. One learnt how to lie in a meadow and be silent and to think a little and watch the clouds. And then one learnt not to be afraid, not to be afraid of the dark or of thunderstorms, or of any animal or person, not even of the Professor. And one learnt to fall down without having to cry and not to make a fuss about damaged knees or bumped heads: for Malee did not like cry-baby children. And so, guided by Malee, one grew up into an upright, clear-eyed little person, without ever realising it.

So much for the human beings that composed Tintin's world; but they were only a fraction of it, and a great deal could be told of the animals, the plants, the things. Of the wind and its voice, of the faces on the wall, which were so alive, although, according to Uncle Mitsuro, they were only made by saltpetre formations. Of the smell of the house, of the steps in the staircase and their names, of the weathercock and the fountain. The acacia has already been mentioned, that covered itself in the spring with such a wealth of blossom and gave forth such a scent that Malee would get up in the middle of the night and stand for hours at the window looking out as though she were hungry for something. And then the copper-

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beech with its cool deep summer shadows beneath which grew wood-sorrel, which was so nice to chew. And that was not all : there were birches, three pale green sisters ; there was a little peach-tree, rose-red in April and covered with velvety fruits in the autumn. There were flowers of every variety, bushes, trees, grasses. There were swallows, finches, birds, butterflies, and silvery gnats without a name and without number.

In the basement there were the clean stalls, the hutches for guinea-pigs, the wire cages with white rats, white mice—a swarming, lively, trusting company. If one held out one's hands, they held on tight and thrust eager, pointed noses through the wire and watched one with clever little red eyes set in the midst of familiar human faces. Others lived in round glasses, carefully bedded in sawdust—those were the poor sick ones, that had been injected, operated upon, that one approached with a hot, pitying shyness. Petermann has already been mentioned. He was Tintin's personal, anxiously tended and guarded property—a fine grey buck, head of a family that rapidly increased and just as rapidly decreased in some mysterious fashion. And in the garden, lying on the hot bed of stones that Tintin had constructed, was Emil, the big spotted Æsculapius-snake, sleeping with a wise expression on his face. Meanwhile, the two tortoises, Pauline and Rosamund, wandered up and down the edge of the fountain-basin, angling for midges with their cleft tongues. These three belonged to the Professor and completed to a certain degree his Satanic picture, although Tintin had long since made friends with them and liked to touch Emil's warm, dry, scaly skin, an attention which Emil accepted with calm pleasure.

In the morning Tintin went into the garden, circled it, plucked three sour, unripe gooseberries, visited the small tomato plants, carried a half-dried-up worm from the sun

into the shade of the bushes, and then sat down with thoughtful mien in the middle of the grass, which was still damp with dew. Helene, who had watched him from the laboratory window, smiled at the little figure in overalls and sandals, and then turned to her work. When she went to the window again about midday, he was still sitting there, motionless, thoughtful and abstracted. She regulated the temperature of a water-bath, fastened a screw clip to a pipette, gave Herr Fabian, who was assisting in the laboratory, some brief instructions, and went quickly into the garden to Tintin.

"What's the matter with you, Tintin? Why are you so quiet?" she asked, and put her hand on his light, fine, sun-warmed hair.

"Ssh," whispered Tintin, "I am watching the daisies. In the early morning they are shut and rosy-cheeked. By midday they are open and look at me with their yellow eyes. Now I have sat myself down to see them open. How do they do it? I've been sitting beside them the whole time and haven't seen anything. And now they are open. And in the evening they'll be asleep again. Now I'm going to wait until the evening, Malee, and watch them."

"Are you as patient as all that?"

Tintin merely nodded his head.

"You must go to Frau Fabian now and get your food. You can watch again afterwards."

"And you?"

"Oh—me. Do you know, Tintin, I can't feed with you to-day. I must stay in the laboratory. I haven't any time."

"Neither have I," said Tintin, and folded his hands on his back with an unmistakable Köbellin gesture. "You must leave me in peace, Malee. I must think things out."

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Helene laughed quietly to herself, and smoothed Tintin's round forehead once again. She allowed herself this affectionate pleasure and then ran back into the laboratory. Köbellin could be heard swearing from the first floor, and there was a smell of ether. A little later on Dr. Mitsuro came into the laboratory, cigarette in mouth, his Asiatic eyes smiling behind the strong lenses of his glasses. He put two test-tubes containing a clear red fluid into the stand. "The extract," he said, and went to the window and contemplated Tintin at his research in the meadow.

"Shiva is storming," he said afterwards. Shiva was the nickname that he had given the Professor. He spoke a pure, very excellent German, in which only the consonants R and L gave him any trouble. "And you? Depressed?"

"Yes. A small disappointment. No, Mitsuro, a big disappointment," said Helene, bent over her work.

"The four thousand seven hundred and sixty-eighth," said Mitsuro imperturbably, lighting another cigarette from the old one and smiling.

"Yes. No good. I had hoped to reach a result with the help of freezing technique. But no good. If I keep our lipoid below minus 10° , I lose the substances with specific action. If I raise it to blood-heat, I get the same old story every time. There's a poison with an action like strychnine in it, which I cannot isolate. And the Professor will go mad soon if we don't get on a bit."

"I am afraid of something quite different—a stroke. He has survived three with his immense will to live. But the next one will be the end," said Mitsuro smiling.

"Oh, no! Shiva won't die before he's finished his job. I'm quite sure of that," said Helene, who was busy colouring a liquid in a titrate glass. "And yesterday's animals?" she asked afterwards.

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"Done for," said Mitsuro from the window. "Always the same thing. Tetanus-like convulsions which are fatal after twenty-four hours at the most."

Helene compressed her lips, and took the tubes with the fresh animal extract from the stand. "Well, we begin from the beginning again," she said with a suggestion of humour in her voice.

"Shiva is now taking a stroll in the garden," said Dr. Mitsuro. "I am very curious to see what Tintin will do."

Helene threw a brief glance through the window. She did not answer. She started off a small electric transmission apparatus and began to work with bowed head.

Tintin very much wanted to get up and go away when he became aware of the Professor: but because one mustn't be afraid, he sat still in the middle of the grass and even looked into the Professor's cunning, bluish-red, bearded face.

"Good-day, dwarf," said Köbellin. "How are you? How is the Latin getting on, *Herr Famulus*? When are we going to read Cornelius Nepos together?"

Tintin, who recognised nothing but pure, incomprehensible scorn in these words, did not answer. The Professor stuck his claw into the pocket of his grimy overall and produced a piece of chewing gum.

"There," he said. "Healthy. Good for you. Tastes good. I dedicate it to your hopeful youthfulness as your benefactor and friend."

Tintin accepted the gift unwillingly, but obediently began to chew the sweet, sharp-tasting substance.

"Dwarf, have you seen our friend Emil?" asked Köbellin.

"He is sitting on the wall," Tintin answered, and pointed with his chin in the direction where in truth the dark coil of the snake could be seen on the top of the wall, with its limp and sleepy tail hanging downwards.

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"Come, we'll pay a call," said Köbellin, grasping Tintin's resisting but courageous little fist in his crooked stiff hand, and leading him away.

"Emil is thin and melancholic," said the Professor. "He must be fed. To-morrow we will feed him. Do you want to watch?"

"No," said Tintin heartily. "Oh, no!"

"You are a mollycoddle," said Köbellin. "Your mother is spoiling you. She wants to spare you things that cannot be avoided. Well, and what then? Someone has got to die so that the others may live. That's how it is, dwarf. Without the knowledge of that all your Latin learning isn't worth a damn to you. The snake opens its mouth and swallows the rabbit. Oh, no? Oh, yes! In the end even we are swallowed up by a large dark throat."

"It'll swallow you," said Tintin angrily, "not me."

"Not you? Not you? Oho, my dwarf. Me first, then you," said Köbellin, and he too became angry. "How old are you? Four? Marvellous! If I still had as many years ahead of me as you have, Homunculus, if I had your useless time for my own use, what do you think would happen then? Time! time! time!"

"If you are going to scold me I shall tell Malee," Tintin threatened, and it seemed to him that in a very little while he would not be able to help being afraid. His small underlip already began to tremble.

"Do you know what I'll tell you now, dwarf?" said the Professor, suddenly opening his second eye, which had a most frightening effect. "This time we'll use Petermann as fodder. This time we'll give Petermann to Emil to eat, and you shall watch. Yes, that's what we'll do."

Although this was a joke which constantly recurred in Köbellin's conversations with Tintin, it struck Tintin

every time with an equally tragic and predestined force. The little fist was torn from the claw, and Tintin fled with fluttering overall and running sandalled feet. He preserved his last ounce of composure to prevent himself from crying out loud. He arrived in the stalls, where Herr Fabian was just tidying up with a birch broom, rushed into the little rabbit hutch, clutched Herr Petermann by his long ears and dragged him away.

"Well, Tintin?" asked Mitsuro, who was holding a mouse head downwards by the tail on the way to his department. "What's the matter? Where are you off to?"

"I won't allow Petermann to be eaten," said Tintin firmly, and his small face was terribly excited. Petermann sat quietly and comfortably in the child's arms and allowed himself to be carried. Tintin trotted into the ground floor and scratched gently at the door of the laboratory.

"Yes? You may come in!" Malee called inside—and immediately everything was all right. Tintin hung himself on to the handle of the door, summoned all his strength and got inside successfully. Once there he sighed deeply, much relieved.

"If you are quite quiet and good, you may stay here a little while," said Malee, who had thrown a glance at his imploring little face. "Sit down on that small stool."

"Petermann, too?" he asked very seriously.

"Yes, Petermann, too," Helene replied, taking in the little figure with a glance of great tenderness, and then going on with her work of shaking a bottle with a regular up and down movement. Tintin sat on the little footstool and looked contentedly about him. Here there was a good and comforting smell. Two wooden wheels were turning silently—that was a pretty little mill. In a fat-tummied glass there was something red that reminded

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him of raspberry juice. Malee had a watch lying in front of her, which one could hear ticking quietly; everything was so quiet here. Herr Petermann snuffled about with his white snout.

"Is the Herr Professor *terribly* stupid?" asked Tintin.

"No. He is almost the cleverest man there is," Malee answered, to Tintin's disappointment.

"But terribly cross?"

"No. He is old, you know. He is like that because he has thought too much and slept too little."

"Will you be old, too? You don't sleep much and you think a lot. You mustn't be old, Malee. Why is he clever? Why does he think such a lot? What is it—thinking? What are you doing? What are you all doing here, you and the Herr Professor and Uncle Mitsuro and the mice and guinea-pigs?" Tintin asked all at once, and even this heap of questions did not seem to him to express his real difficulty properly.

"I can't explain that to you. You would not understand, Tintin."

"Oh, yes, I understand everything. Has it got two names?"

"Well, listen, Tintin. I will try and explain it to you. We are all thinking because we are trying to make a juice, a medicine."

"What sort of a medicine, Malee?"

"A medicine that will make people big and strong and cheerful. And that will prevent them from getting old. A more wonderful medicine than anyone has yet discovered."

"Really? As good as that? Well, why don't you make it?"

"That is not so simple. That is why we have to *think*. There is still a mistake in the medicine."

"Why?"

“ Yes, Tintin, why? Why! I will explain it to you. Every human being and every animal has certain things inside them that are called glands. One in the head, one in the neck, and in the tummy and everywhere. And each gland pours a little juice into the blood, each gland a different juice. And now the Herr Professor has found that one of these glands has a particular juice in which there is something which makes men or animals strong and happy and powerful and keeps them young. And now we are trying to copy this juice. And if we can do that then we can help all the weak and sad and old people. That would be nice, wouldn't it, Tintin? ”

“ Yes. Emil may have a drink of the medicine. But not the Professor,” decided Tintin, out for revenge. Helene smiled.

“ And what have the mice and guinea-pigs got to do with it? Why mayn't I go in to Uncle Mitsuro? What are animal experiments? Why is Herr Fabian always having to bury dead little mice? ” asked Tintin, oppressed. “ It gives me dreams,” he added, and laid his head on Petermann's grey coat. Helene looked at him sharply and saw Firilei's eyes looking at her from Tintin's face.

“ You must not be afraid, Tintin,” she said, putting her bottles to one side and coming to him. “ The little mice all go to the mouse heaven. The mice must help us and they do so gladly. They would rather do that than be eaten by the cat.”

“ Please, Malee, find the juice soon; please,” said Tintin, and his lower lip began to tremble. “ When did the Professor think this out? How many mice have helped already? ”

“ A great many, Tintin. The Herr Professor has been thinking for a good many years; five years, and again five, and again five,” said Malee. Tintin raised his small,

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round hand and stared very hard at his five stiffly outstretched fingers on which his own personal method of calculation depended. He sighed deeply.

"And how much longer must you all go on thinking and not having any time to spare, and not letting me play my whistle?" he asked.

"I don't know. I don't know, Tintin," answered Helene, and now she sighed, too. "Perhaps for not so very long. But perhaps for a very, very long time. Five years and another five and another five, over and over again."

"But then I shall be grown up!"

"That is possible, Tintin. We must not be impatient."

Tintin reflected for some time on what he had heard. Helene turned off the transmission, took up with her familiar grasp, that Tintin knew so well, four test tubes between her fingers, and put them in the centrifuge. Tintin enjoyed the spectacle of the turning tremendously. Then Helene carried the tubes to the hot-air steriliser.

"When I am big, I'll marry you, Malee," Tintin resolved at the end of his thoughts. Malee smiled at him affectionately.

"Yes, do. That is very nice of you," she said, and stroked his hair. Petermann lay quiet on Tintin's little overall, asleep with open eyes. Tintin laid his small hand on the warm, furry coat, watched Malee's white apron moving back and forth for a short time, and listened to the clock ticking, and then the retort became a man who had raspberry juice in his stomach, and a small black cork hat on his head, and then Tintin fell suddenly asleep, worn out with thinking. Helene stopped for a second and looked at the sleeping child. Another day was almost over.

Dr. Mitsuro slipped in through the door and said, smiling: "Your presence is commanded up above. Big

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affair. There's to be an all-night session. Shall I put Tintin to bed?"

"I want to put him to bed myself. Please say I'm coming immediately. Fabian must take the glycogen solution out of the steriliser in twenty-three minutes and then call me."

She picked up the child. Mitsuro gently extricated the sleeping rabbit from the hands of the sleeping Tintin. Outside, in front of the windows, all the birds in the garden suddenly began to sing, and Herr Fabian could be seen fetching the snake Emil from the wall and carrying him to his cage. Helene lifted her head and then she noticed that the day was dying and that the first mother-of-pearl evening cloud was stealing over the sky, which was still light.

"Are you tired?" asked Dr. Mitsuro, looking at the yearning and austere line in which her chin swept away from her throat.

"Yes, a little, perhaps," she said, and carried the child carefully up the stairs that led to her attic.

"You ought to smoke, too. It is stimulating," the Japanese suggested, and smiled.

"I'm taking kola now," she replied.

"Shiva has secretly prescribed injections for himself," said Mitsuro softly. "Everybody is keeping himself going as best he can."

"Yes, Mitsuro," said Helene, standing in the door of her room, the child in her arms. "Can you realise that there are still people who have a midday meal and sleep at night?"

Dr. Mitsuro stood on the stairs in the reserved attitude of the Asiatic; he had the rabbit in his arms; a light was reflected in his spectacles and he smiled.

"Patience," he said. "Patience, patience, patience."

This word, four times repeated, encompassed a lifetime.

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The buildings of the South German Chemical Manufacturing Company sprawl over the countryside just outside the town. Halls, towers, roofs, crowd and rise above one another. Factory chimneys climb steeply into the thick air, hanging black flags of soot in the wind. Silos stretch interminably along the railway tracks and quay-sides. Cranes work like patient, long-legged, long-necked animals of iron. Bridges, stairways, passages, cross one another in the air. Pipes of every size wind their way along walls. Within the halls there is a stamping, hissing, droning and clattering, and the ventilators liberate clouds of chemical vapours.

Helene Willfüer, who entered the works through the cast-iron main gate on a winter afternoon, hesitated a moment, transfixed by the picture of swarming ant-like activity, which the first courtyard offered her. Standing beside a wall that was covered with innumerable control clocks, she even faltered a little, and her lips pressed themselves into a small, determined line. She wore a dark coat and a small, simple felt hat, but she wore new, faultless suede gloves on her hands and looked very neat.

"Herr Director Botstiber is expecting me," she said to the porter, who decided to doff his cap. Various telephone connections were effected behind a glass window, then a man came and led Helene to a miniature railway which conducted passenger traffic between the widespread buildings of the works. Helene, bowling along in the small open coach, lifted her face to the cold air, and as she inhaled the familiar smell of all these vapours, steams and chemicals that streamed from the buildings, she began to smile. The main building, before which Helene was requested to descend, showed signs of æsthetic endeavour among all this smoke-begrimed utility, and a pair of symbolical sandstone figures seemed

to be having a great deal of trouble in their efforts to convey with swollen muscles a picture of work, and also support the columns of a porch. Inside there hung various indicators, and an open lift slid steadily, with its small open compartments, upwards and downwards, upwards and downwards, like a chaplet unrolled by some obliging giant. A young person received Helene, led her along carpeted corridors that became more and more quiet and impressive; and then a green padded door was opened. Inside were men's faces shrouded in cigar smoke. Director Botstiber, whom Helene already knew, came forward from behind his writing-table. He had a striking head. He looked like an Americanised Goethe of the twentieth century. The other men rose from their arm-chairs and made short, stiff bows. Helene listened to various names and titles without taking them in. One of the men she knew from earlier conferences. He was Dr. Sandhagen, the chief chemist of the Pharmacological Department—an elderly man with an unnaturally small, completely bald head. Helene, who esteemed him as a marvellous worker, impulsively held out her large gloved hand, which he grasped respectfully. Then she, too, was sitting in a deep chair of brownish scarred leather, smoking a cigarette and waiting with a composed expression for what they had to say to her. If there were any excitement within her, which would have been quite justifiable, nothing of it affected her external composure. Frau Dr. Willfürer was sitting with the leading brains of the biggest German chemical works for an important conference on which great things depended, and she created as cool and disinterested an impression as though she were used to doing nothing else.

Director Botstiber looked at her. With his experienced eye he took in the determination and also the

exhausted, overworked and strained look of her face. Quickly he recognised the redness of her eyelids as an inflammatory condition due to too much work by artificial light. He summarised his impressions and decided that this Willfüer was an incalculably precious worker, who must be won for the business at all costs. And having made this decision he threw one leg over the other, put away his cigar and picked up a glass paper-weight, into which he had a habit of peering during conferences—it was a trick, a means of concentration.

“We have asked you to come here,” he began, “to talk over the details of the contract which we propose to make with you. You will permit me first of all to tell these gentlemen briefly the gist of the preliminary negotiations which we have already conducted. They concern, as you gentlemen already know, the manufacture of a new medium, ‘Testinucleose,’ the patent for which we have obtained from Professor Köbellin. The medium has been tested with amazing success, and has an important future. Here—if you gentlemen would care to glance through this literature,” he said, and took a pile of printed papers from the writing-desk and handed them to the stern, bearded men who were sitting in their arm-chairs waiting. They had, however, already made themselves acquainted with it, and were familiar with the opinions and the reports of the scientific journals, and the printed lecture delivered at the last Physiological Congress, so that the handing round of these pamphlets was nothing more than a business gesture. Moreover, this new medium had made quite enough sensation in scientific circles. . . .

“You see,” the Director continued, burying himself again in his glass prism, “that ‘Testinucleose’ has a somewhat similar action to that of Steinach’s much-discussed operative experiment of not so long ago. But



its action is not limited so completely to the reproductive sphere, but gets to the whole root of existence, if I may be allowed to express myself so popularly and unscientifically. However, we have a draft of a small advertising pamphlet here, and it would perhaps be simplest to read you a few phrases from it. Dr. Sandhagen, if you please. . . .”

Dr. Sandhagen, holding a paper well away from his far-sighted eyes, began to read aloud in a heavy tone of voice.

“Testinucleose is a lipoid which Professor Köbellin, assisted by Dr. Sei Mitsuro and Dr. Helene Willfürer, was able in the first instance to isolate from a certain group of cells in the hypophysis. Its analysis and synthetic preparation has at last been achieved after fourteen years of experimental work.

“It is a specific remedy, which not only possesses a rejuvenating power, but has a general tonic effect. It excites the formation of new cells in the system and raises the power and enjoyment of life. Its effects are not limited to the stimulation of the sexual functions, but a general, quite surprising stimulation and resuscitation of worn-out organisms appears after a course of Testinucleose. Moreover, this effect has not only been achieved in ageing people, but also in people who have needed strengthening after illness or an operation, as well as those who are by nature and disposition lacking in energy and vitality. During the past few years science has revealed the connection between the glands and mental conditions. The dependence of mental conditions and processes on the progress of the endocrine activity of the glands has been shown and proved by the action of Testinucleose. Testinucleose is the synthetic preparation of a hormone which is only produced by certain cells of the hypophysis, and to a certain extent stimulates

the action of the other glands, especially the sexual gland. It thus avoids the complex sexual action and retains only those specific influences on the formation of new cells and general condition which one may popularly describe as keeping young or rejuvenation. Testinucleose has a most reliable and astonishing action and is entirely free from poisonous or harmful ingredients. It can be prepared in tablets or ampoules for commercial use. Briefly, one may say that the age-old problem of rejuvenation has been satisfactorily solved."

Dr. Sandhagen lowered his piece of paper, and looked about him with a bored air. One of the gentlemen whispered something behind his hand to one of the other gentlemen. Their heads moved a little, but they only showed a moderate interest. They were so used at these chemical works to transactions of this kind, that the preparation of a new, even a sensational remedy, did not greatly impress them. Helene, sitting in her arm-chair, thought: Tintin must have some new shoes; he is growing so fast. At the same time, and with a mocking smile, she thought of those last tempestuous, crazy nights of work before this remedy had actually been found. She thought of Köbellin the researcher's madness, of his rages, his hungering, his burning fear lest he should die too soon. Then Mitsuro's friendly face floated through the roomful of arm-chairs. A small strand of her hair had turned quite white at her left temple—she did not know when—she pushed it back. And meanwhile I have become an old woman, she thought.

Now it had all come to a matter of leaflets, a matter of advertisements. Now a holy—yes, a holy—fervour was being transmuted into commerce. It was a great success. And there was a little sadness in this great success. She sat for a moment quite lost in thought, and when she awoke, Director Botstiber was holding forth again.

“We were successful in obtaining the patent for Testinucleose from Köbellin shortly before his death. Köbellin founded a trust with the considerable sum which he received, whereby he placed his house and fortune at the disposal of penniless scholars for experimental research work. The objection raised by Herr Kommerzienrat Zimmer,”—a bow towards one of the gentlemen—“is of importance; namely, that the name ‘Testinucleose’ does not appear to be sufficiently popular. We have, therefore, decided to call the new remedy ‘Vitalin,’ which is perhaps somewhat unscientific but striking. The advertising department will submit proposals for suitable advertising slogans for the catchword ‘Vitalin.’ Köbellin’s wish that the manufacture of ‘Vitalin’ should be carried out under the direction of Frau Dr. Willfüer is in accordance with our own wishes. We have, unfortunately, not been able to secure the services of Dr. Mitsuro, who succeeded in obtaining a patent for Japan, and who will prove a decided rival to us in the world market if Vitalin turns out to be what it promises. Frau Dr. Willfüer is, therefore, the only person in Europe who has any knowledge of the practical manufacture of the product. If I was correctly informed by Köbellin, I understand it was you who personally obtained the final and decisive result in this work?”

Director Botstiber directed this last question to Helene herself with a complimentary bow. For a moment he allowed himself to drop his business-like attitude and become more personal, only to withdraw himself again immediately. The bearded gentlemen murmured questioningly and looked at Frau Doktor Willfüer, this large, maidenly, pale and simple woman, who now began to smile quietly.

“Yes, perhaps I may have dotted the i,” she said. “I found that the purified substance is reactivated and can

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be brought to its full effect by being subjected to a certain process of radiation. For years we fought against an unknown poison which our base contained. At last we achieved purification, complete isolation. But with that the specific action was lost. We had to begin again from the beginning. I then hit upon this radiation process. I simply adapted a medical method to chemistry. It was just the egg of Columbus. I have already mentioned to my colleague Sandhagen that we shall need an enormous department for ultra-violet rays——”

Dr. Sandhagen in the background made a little confirmatory gesture. His small, completely bald head reflected the pale light of the winter sun. . . . Tintin shall have some skates too, Helene thought, although her attention was now firmly fixed on the business.

“I am very pleased to hear that you have already turned your thoughts to the practical side, Frau Doktor. It is perhaps very unbusinesslike of me to tell you that it would be of great value to us to gain your services for our Works. Everything may appear to you to be rather dry here, but we do not underestimate the importance of this affair at all. Only, naturally, science is a different thing from commerce. With us business comes first—everything else afterwards. You will have to accustom yourself to some changes.”

“I like to change my skin. I do not find it very difficult. I’ve done it often enough already,” said Helene contentedly, and she imparted a little of her warmth to the general matter-of-factness.

“Women are more talented and adaptable in such matters,” Director Botstiber replied ingratiatingly. “We may, therefore, accept in principle your willingness and also your suitability. We have now only to discuss the main features of your contract.”

“Yes, please. Perhaps you could make some sugges-

tions, Herr Director," Helene said, and now she was sitting very erect in her chair. She noticed that her hands showed a tendency to twist off the buttons of her gloves, and she put them firmly and severely on the arms of her chair, where they had to stay quietly.

"You know that, broadly speaking, we have to conform to tariff regulations. According to these you would be entitled to a commencing salary of 260 marks a month. Naturally, we cannot put you on the same basis as our other young chemists, and we will therefore find some loophole out of the tariff difficulty. I propose an allowance of 200 marks a month for expenses?" He threw a hasty glance at Helene's face and added quickly: "We could also add a bonus of, say, perhaps another 200 marks a month."

Helene began to smile, "Oh, no!" was all she said.

The silent gentlemen in the arm-chairs murmured. Helene looked across at Dr. Sandhagen, who lowered his eyelids quite slowly once. Don't give way! was what this little signal between colleagues meant.

"If I understand aright you simply decline these terms? I assure you that they are exceptionally favourable terms for us to offer you. After all, we have to take into consideration your inexperience of commercial work. For even if the scientific direction of the department is entrusted to you, we would have to place all the organisation and practical work in other hands. That not only means a division of work, but an increase in expense——"

"It is not altogether certain, Herr Director, that I should be incapable of doing any organising or practical work. I have naturally endeavoured to educate and inform myself on such matters since you indicated to me the possibility of this post. I have already told you that I can easily adapt myself. Moreover, concrete practical work is much more after my own heart than abstract

scientific work. The work that I accomplished in connection with this so-called Vitalin was quite untheoretical, it was simply getting down to things with both hands. It remains to be seen whether I am capable of doing my bit in your factory. Always providing we come to an agreement."

It was a challenge, one of those little fanfares that Helene Willfüer was in the habit of sounding at decisive moments in her life. Director Botstiber lifted his Goethe-like head, and now exerted himself too. "I hope so," he said. "I hope very confidently, Frau Doktor, that we will come to some agreement. Tell us what you have in mind—but I warn you against any undue expectations. We reckon with pfennigs, although that may sound strange to you. That pfennig by which we can cheapen an article grows into a million in our turnover. Calculation, calculation, that is the chief thing!"

"Very well, Herr Director. I, too, calculate; perhaps not with pfennigs, but with living values. I am thirty. Up to now I have lived a life—worse than that of a dog. I have had no time to live. I have starved, lain awake, been frozen to death. I have fought my way through every form of want and privation. Now I would like to have some reward for all this. I would like to live decently, I would like to be able to give my child the things I have had to do without. I would like things to be comfortable for me; quite simply—comfortable. You are all looking at me in amazement—but I can't express myself any better. I want to be comfortable."

Helene looked at the smiling, surprised faces. Dr. Botstiber unbent from his coldness and said: "We wish you that, too, heartily, Frau Doktor. Most certainly you have the right to demand a comfortable life. Whatever we can do to help—Please let us hear how you think this being comfortable can be achieved in practice."

“ I insist on the absolute control of the department in which ‘ Vitalin ’ is produced, in so far as the chemical side is concerned. For this I require a monthly salary of 1,000 marks. And in addition a participation in the profits of the department,” Helene said shortly.

“ How much ? ”

“ Have you had estimates of costs prepared yet ? And what turnover can we count on in the first instance ? ”

“ I figure—very approximately—that we shall be able to put the article on the wholesale market at two marks eighty. The turnover—well, we hope for a big turnover, otherwise we should not put so much capital into the business. The manufacture is expensive, that you know, and the profit is small. You can see the figures, but I fear you will not be able to make much of them.”

“ I hope I shall. I have given a great deal of study to statistical and technical finance in my spare time since Köbellin’s death,” Helene Willfürer said shortly. “ I demand two per cent. of the net profit. I hope to be able to cheapen the manufacture in a short time. Naturally, I shall be given a laboratory for my own personal work.”

“ We already have an experimental laboratory in which forty chemists are solely engaged in experimental work.”

“ I must have my own personal laboratory, with two assistants, and two women analysts. It is quite natural that I should want to get on with my work. I am not satisfied with just this discovery of ‘ Vitalin. ’ That is only a small part, a beginning. My own private laboratory is more important to me than the whole salary,” Helene said impatiently, and the redness of her eyelids deepened.

“ On condition that our works have the first claim on any eventual results of your work—I would concur,” Director Botstiber replied slowly, and he laid his prism down and with one glance at the gentlemen in the back-

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ground obtained their agreement. "Are those all your conditions?"

"I do not want to work more than ten hours a day for the factory. And I would like to sleep at night," Helene said, and this sounded just like a small child. It came so unexpectedly from her earnest and determined mouth that they all began to laugh. The men rose, and Helene stood up, too. When she tried to approach Botstiber she noticed that she felt dizzy. She forced it down. Overworked, she thought, angrily. Weak. Incapable. Nerves! She put her gloved fingers into a great many outstretched hands. Botstiber, behind a veil of cigar smoke, said: "Then I will have the proposed form of contract drawn up on these lines. Would you be good enough to call on me again to-morrow at the same time?"

"Certainly. Might I have another cigarette now?" Helene said, holding herself up by the writing-desk.

"Is anything the matter?" Doctor Sandhagen asked, coming quickly to her. She was so extraordinarily pale beneath her small hat.

"Nothing. It's absurd. We haven't slept for years, Mitsuro and I," said Helene, very annoyed with herself and her weakness. "I'm a bit run down. Nothing to speak of."

"You will have to take a course of 'Vitalin,'" said one of the men in the background jokingly. Smiles. Bows. The green door. The open lifts. Doctor Sandhagen, who went down with her, said:

"The car is still in the East Court. I will have it sent over. Director Botstiber asks you to drive into town in one of our cars. You look very tired."

"That's all wrong, really. I had to keep so wide awake with all those commercial bigwigs. With Köbellin I became a kind of recluse myself."

"An eccentric?" said Dr. Sandhagen, standing beside



her in the entrance hall. "Far from it! My compliments on the sure and experienced way in which you conducted your negotiations. I was afraid you would get the worst of the bargain. I am, naturally, all for chemistry as against business. It is excellent that you have earmarked a percentage of the profits for yourself."

"Yes, it went well," Helene said monosyllabically.

"I am almost inclined to envy you. I am only an ordinary chemist who plods along and holds his nice position by devotion to duty. A big thing has never come my way. It must have been a marvellous moment when you found the final result. How long were you working at it?"

"I myself six years. But Köbellin and Mitsuro more than twice as long. Did you say a marvellous moment? But that is talking like a layman. There was no moment. It was only an eternal waiting. And then, finally, came the experiment with the rays. Two hours' radiation—animal experiment—no action. Four hours—nothing. Eight hours, ten hours, twelve hours—nothing. Mitsuro wanted to give it up. Just at that time Köbellin was down with another stroke. But I stuck at it obstinately. After twenty-four hours Mitsuro deserted me. Then I sat alone in the laboratory. Another day, another night. Mitsuro came back, sat beside me. Made his experiments. Suddenly Köbellin crept in, lame and half-dead as he was. He could no longer talk by then, his mouth had become quite crooked. And, will you believe it, that ruin of a creature gave us courage and strength again? We did not eat, we did not sleep, we only drank black coffee, smoked and stuffed ourselves with kola. After twenty-four hours the first reaction showed itself in the animal. It was an old, sterile female guinea-pig, a yellow-spotted lethargic animal. It stood up on its hind legs and looked for food on the edge of its cage. It was the first success-

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ful animal experiment for six years. Then we collapsed and slept. We just slept, Mitsuro for seventeen hours, and I for twenty-three. My small boy said afterwards that it was like being in Sleeping Beauty's castle. And that was all. Everything that came afterwards was so simple."

"Yes. That's how such things are. And you have a son, *Frau Kollegin*?"

"Yes, a dear little fellow. The thought that I shall now have a little time for him is my greatest pleasure."

"Here is the car. *Auf wiedersehen*! I'm looking forward to working with you," said Dr. Sandhagen, opening the door himself.

"Thanks, and I with you. Until to-morrow!"

Helene fell back on the cushions. Why, look! there's some lilac, she thought, and savoured the delicate scent of the pale hot-house bloom which was nodding in the vase. She saw her face in the mirror in the front of the car. "I am old. How old I look. I haven't looked in a mirror for a long time. There are wrinkles already. One ought to be a little vain. A white strand at the temple. But Tintin thinks I'm lovely. Dear Tintin! He will get his new shoes. He will be able to skate, and for Christmas he shall have a large box of building blocks. Malee will buy everything. Imagine it! Malee is sitting in a car sticking her nose into hot-house lilac in the middle of winter. Congratulations, Frau Doktor! Director of a chemical works. My laboratory must be a first-rate one, even if it costs a million. Figures! Figures! Malee may buy herself patent-leather shoes and a black chiffon dress, and perhaps even a fur coat! Malee will go to a concert, read books, travel. We shall be comfortable, my Tintin, we shall be comfortable. A flat with a bathroom. A bicycle for Tintin. A table-cloth of pure white linen. A cut-glass vase full of flowers, fresh ones every day. A

thousand unfulfilled wishes that can now be fulfilled. A huge heaven lies before us, a Utopia full of things one has gone without. And a lot of glorious work. And a lot of glorious time to give Tintin. . . .”

The car left the industrial neighbourhood and jolted over a long, long bridge into the town. It jolted a refrain that Helene had always known :

Done. Done. Done it. Done it. Done it.

Dr. Helene Willfüer clasped her newly gloved hands together and thrust out her chin. And sitting alone in the motor car she suddenly let forth a long suppressed cry from the depth of her heart, a single, high cry of triumph, the harsh and strong cry with which a young falcon soars into the air.

It was already afternoon when Ambrosius left the train at a small station on the Ligurian coast. For a few minutes he stood breathless, looking at the square lying high up behind the railway station, and glancing over the flat roofs, the gardens, the steps, the trees, that spread down in a gentle slope towards the sea. As Ambrosius drew in the clean, fresh taste of the air, his chest grew even broader than usual, and his shoulders braced themselves contentedly beneath the grey cloth of his travelling suit. A *vetturino*, who had stared with a frank and friendly expression at this strange enormous gentleman, offered his services and was told in distinct but clumsy Italian to drive up his small cab. The little mule-like horse tinkled along under a red net. Ambrosius threw his luggage with zest into the cab, and then sat there laughing, while small urchins threw camellias after him. He groped delightedly in his pockets, threw out a few coins, looked back at the small, black-haired urchins in the yellow dust of the road, and then the brakes were applied, and a shadow from the wall threw a coolness over the downward-winding path.

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Ambrosius took off his hat and bared his brow to the air which streamed by with a breath of evening and the sea. His hair was streaked with grey, but was thicker than at the time of his illness, and he wore a short beard. He had become thin ; his figure had taken on a rigid and taut appearance, which increased the impression of height and giant strength. He wore spectacles, which protected the blind right eye by a black glass, and helped the weakness of the other by a high-powered lens. Behind this lens, however, the rescued eye wore a strong, calm expression and eagerly drank in all it saw.

The hotel which Ambrosius had chosen was situated at the lowest point in the small town. It was a friendly, pleasant white cube with small, curved balconies in front of the windows. Behind the house the garden dropped lower and lower in terraces ; below were the bathing cabins, and then the land waded with dark grey rocks and reefs into the green sea.

Ambrosius, walking out on to his little balcony, absorbed the view of the gently curving bay, and listened to the regular beat, deep and sighing, with which the breakers broke over the reefs. Turning back towards his room, he smilingly observed the bed beneath its mosquito net, a small, fragile white tent. He washed himself, refreshing his hands and giving himself a clear happy feeling in mind and heart. When he had unpacked and put away his things, and as soon as he had a few books lying on the table to give him a feeling of being at home, he lit a cigar and went through the small light hall to the garden. The green of the trees, the delicate scent of the mimosa, and single bright flowers in the flower borders along the path, all gave a semblance of summer to the fading afternoon. But the breeze from the sea was sharp and surprisingly cool ; it had the fresh and unsettled taste of early spring. When Ambrosius

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had been led by zigzag paths and small steps made of dark, pitted rocks down to the lowest garden terrace, the sun was already sinking over the water. The bright tint which it gave to the mist and the dainty feathery clouds on the horizon was not red, but a flaming, metallic green, and this intensified the cool, virgin freshness of the approaching evening. Sea-gulls drew their white arcs of flight over the surface of the water, and a red-brown sail returning home was dyed black by the fast-sinking disc of sun. Then it quickly became dark and very quiet, and the growing, continuous noise of the breakers faded into a part of the stillness.

Ambrosius sat down on a stone bench and with a feeling of deep pleasure allowed the twilight to engulf him. When he had sat thus for a time, he threw his cigar away and laid his clasped hands on a stone balustrade. A startled lizard slipped across the path and disappeared. Below, in the noise of the breakers, which seemed to be increasing with the turn of the tide, voices could be heard. A high boyish voice, and the deep, soothing voice of a woman. Ambrosius, somewhat disturbed, bent forward and looked down. He could make out a small figure that jumped from rock to rock in the twilight below, trying to reach the beach. It was a boy, who sometimes stood still and turned back towards the sea, calling and waving with his arm. Finally, with one bound, he reached the edge of the garden below the bathing cabins, broke straight through the bushes up the hill and emerged on the terrace at the feet of Ambrosius. He swung himself over the stone balustrade, seemed to be startled by the unexpected sight of this large, strange and motionless man, but pulled himself together immediately, gave a polite greeting in Italian and ran on. A breath of moist freshness lingered behind his small figure. Ambrosius, smiling gently, touched by a

scarcely realised happiness, watched him as long as he was visible, and then turned again to the sea which, in the meantime, had become darker and with its rising tide had almost completely covered the reefs below. Only one steep rock a little further out still thrust its jagged outline high above the moving surface and was bathed in a strong ray of light from a distant cloud that reflected the light of the sunken sun once again to the shore.

On this rock there sat a woman.

She sat quite motionless in the uncertain light, and her body looked as though it were growing out of the dark rock. She wore a dress that may have been bright blue, for it had absorbed all the colour of the evening sea, and fell about her in deep soft folds. She was sitting there in an abstracted and thoughtful attitude, her hands about her knees and her face turned towards the sea. There was both restfulness and yearning in her pose, and Ambrosius, after he had looked towards her for a time, released his breath, which he had unconsciously held, in a tremulous sigh. The woman and the evening belonged to each other. They were one and very beautiful. Ambrosius remained seated: he, too, was under the spell of this vegetative existence, this plant-like satisfaction in just breathing and keeping still. Only when it was quite dark was there a movement out there on the rock. The figure rose and made its way through the white, noisy surf. Ambrosius watched her approach with excitement. It looked as though she were striding through the water. He took his glasses away from his strained eyes, for now there was nothing more to be seen, and he waited with an overpowering and wondering curiosity for the passing by of the stranger. First he heard steps below the terrace, but it was nothing, and in the end he had to be content with the surmise that there were other ways back to the hotel. He got up, threw a grateful farewell glance over

reefs and sea and found his way up the steps to the house. He hesitated at the door of the dining-room, and then he ran rapidly up to his room, and changed his suit : he had no better reason for this impulsive step than a boyish anticipation of meeting in the dining-room the woman of the rocks.

But when, seated in the airy little dining-room behind his small, red-shaded lamp, he ventured to look round, he was disappointed. He tried table after table—risking this unwonted exertion for his eye—but he saw none but ordinary faces. There was nobody here who looked like one who could sit all alone on that rock bathed in the waning light, so restful and yet so full of longing, and then come striding home through the surf. He quickly finished the light Italian evening meal, lit his cigar and left the room ; not, to his discomfort, without drawing the glances of the guests to his tall figure. He walked through the reading-room with an oppressed and yet expectant feeling, lounged about the hall restlessly for a little, and then stepped out in front of the house where the breakers could be heard more distinctly. At last he grew tired, feeling the effects of the journey, the change of air and the strange evening, and so he went to his room. Half-way up the stairs he stood still and snapped his fingers. Now I know who it is : now I've recognised her, he thought : Feuerbach. It is Feuerbach's "Nanna." The same carriage, the size, the impressiveness, the reserve—and the same line of the averted face.

This recognition gave him some measure of satisfaction, but there still remained a restlessness, a feeling in his mind that was almost anticipation. On reaching his room, he lit a cigar and strode meditatively to and fro, his hand clasped on his back and his head sunk on his chest. Well, here you are, Ambrosius, old fellow, he thought in effect, here you are on the glittering coast of

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your youth, of your first great experience. Your eye can still see. Your heart still beats. Your breast can still be disturbed by the vague outline of a woman in a landscape. We will wait and see what else is going to happen you, you young man of fifty. . . .

Whilst he was thus meditating he heard voices that he already knew, one high and boyish and the other deep and feminine in reply. They came through the wall, through a door which led into the next room—apparently the Feuerbach vision was a near neighbour in the hotel. Ambrosius, enjoying the aroma of his cigar, listened to the confused sounds. There was laughter, questions and replies followed quickly on one another and then there was a splashing of water. Finally there was a softer and quieter murmuring, and in the end the boy appeared to be reciting his prayers clearly and loudly. And then all was quiet.

Ambrosius, who had already taken off his coat, went on to the balcony in his shirt-sleeves. A cool night breeze tugged at the thin silk sleeves and chilled him as though with a touch. Below lay gently moving tree-tops and the ragged outline of a palm cut strangely into the half-overcast moonlight in the sky. Ambrosius stood waiting: for what, he did not know. The sound of a mandoline drifted along an alley in the distance, a strange cry rose above the harp-like sound of the surf on the shore down below. Then all was still and Ambrosius could hear quite distinctly the quiet and intimate sound of the leaves of a book being turned.

The balcony next to his was empty, but a soft light streamed out of the open door through the curving shutters. Curling cigarette smoke with its fine aroma floated along in this light and mingled with the smoke from Ambrosius' cigar—a fact which gave him an inexplicable pleasure. He pictured the room behind the




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open balcony door, and again he held his breath to let it escape in a deep sigh. He pictured the sleeping child and the woman reading her book page by page with bowed head and a glowing cigarette in her resting hand.

Good night, Nanna, thought Ambrosius, laughing at himself. I hope you are reading something suitable. I suggest Goethe's *Italian Journey*, or Ruskin. I am glad that you live next door to me, for Feuerbach once called you the loveliest woman in Rome. How charming it is to see no more of an imagined woman than the smoke of her invisible cigarette!

He left the window open, undressed and crept under his mosquito net. He could hear the sea solemnly singing and then he fell asleep, contentedly and dreamlessly.

A yellow sun awoke him, and a glance without his glasses at the clock showed him, mistily but all too clearly, the lateness of the hour. He jumped out of bed, feeling fresh and full of particular happiness. Dressed, he was about to go down to breakfast, but a glimpse of the garden led him astray. He stepped outside. The paths were damp, and the air, too, and the shrubs along the paths with their dark green shining foliage. Ambrosius found a small orange tree that was covered with golden balls of fruit. He picked an orange from the branches, felt the pleasant coolness of its skin against the palm of his hand, and inhaled its bitter-sweet scent. Wandering on he decided to bite into the fruit and the cold, sharp, unripe taste seemed a part of the freshness of the morning. Mechanically he followed the same path as the evening before. He gazed with pleasure and wonder at the yellow blossoming cloud of a mimosa tree. He picked up a twig of eucalyptus that was lying on the path, and drank in its acrid scent as well as the sweetness of the mimosa and the bitterness of the orange. Everything was dripping with dew and morning freshness and scents. Step-



ping on to the lowest terrace he saw the sea, very smooth, and seeming much larger and broader than in the evening, with a golden troop of sailing ships riding with the wind against the sun. The reefs had all reappeared, and the change of tide far out showed light green with delicate silver crests. A large, unknown butterfly zigzagged away over the water. Ambrosius sat down on his bench, and with his uninjured and watchful eye absorbed the morning.

Something was already moving between the reefs. Somebody was bathing there. After he had gazed for a while and forced his eye to further exertion, Ambrosius recognised the boy and the woman of the evening before. The boy was naked, his body was golden-brown, and he kept clambering up on the rocks and then disappearing into the green of the water to an accompaniment of cries and shouts of glee. And "Nanna," too, was enjoying herself, with no sign of Feuerbach's repose. Despite the fact that she wore a bathing costume, she already seemed strangely familiar to Ambrosius to-day. She had picked out the highest rock, her rock, and was using it as her diving board, diving with outstretched body and perfect action. Ambrosius, after he had watched for a time, was infected with the pleasure of bathing and swimming, and he began to smile. Although a very cool breeze was blowing from the sea, he felt hot and was seized with an overwhelming desire to join the active figures in the surf. He stood up, and was on the point of going indoors to fetch his bathing things when he noticed that the two people down below were leaving the water : they ran over the rocks to the shore, their skins gleaming wet, shedding drops in the sunlight from every limb. On the beach their progress became a race, and finally they disappeared laughing into the cabins. Ambrosius sat down again and waited. The wish to see the woman

distinctly and close to had taken possession of him with a sudden and inexplicable violence.

After a few minutes the boy reappeared dressed. He was wearing a deep blue linen suit, his bronzed legs were bare and he had sandals on his feet. He kept his hands thrust in his leather belt and his hair lay smooth and shining with wetness on his forehead, displaying the small and well-bred shape of his head. Ambrosius did not see all this until the boy had sauntered along the terrace, and now stood still watching him in turn. When Ambrosius, without realising it, gave him a shy, yet inviting, smile, the child came up to him without taking his eyes off him.

"Do you speak German?" he asked familiarly, halting in front of Ambrosius.

"Yes, my boy," said Ambrosius, pleased with the intimate note of the question.

The boy pointed a brown forefinger at Ambrosius' eyes. "If you'll let me look through your dark window once, I'll show you my horse in exchange," he said expectantly.

"There you are," answered Ambrosius, taking off his glasses, so that his surroundings became blurred and darkened.

"Pouf!" said the boy, after he had peered through the glasses. "That's nothing. A microscope is much nicer. Thanks. Now you may see my horse."

The small brown hand was plunged into a pocket and brought to light a sea-horse, a poor sun-scorched thing, that was offered on the palm of the hand with great pride.

"*Hippocampus antiquorum*," he added.

Ambrosius had to smile. "Do you know Latin? Why, you are the complete zoologist," he said.

"Yes, of course I am. I want to become a zoologist. Uncle Marx is one already. Uncle Marx says that when

I'm grown up, and have become a zoologist, I can go with him to Africa. Topping, isn't it ? ”

“ Yes, topping. And what is your name ? ”

“ Tintin. Really Valentin.”

“ Valentin. How extraordinary ! You've got the same name as mine. That's fine ! ”

“ Yes, it is a particularly nice name, Malee says. If one is called Valentin one will become a very clever man, Malee says. That is why I'm called it, Malee says. Are you clever ? ”

“ Passably, Valentin,” Ambrosius said smiling, and watching the small brown hand disappear again into the pocket with the sea-horse.

“ Can you swim ? ” he was cross-examined.

“ I hope I can still. I have been ill for a long time, you know.”

“ Oh, well, you'll have to take Malee's medicine and then you'll be strong again. Will you go bathing with us this afternoon ? ”

“ No.”

“ Why not ? ”

“ I haven't got the courage, Valentin.”

“ Haven't the courage ? Surely you're not afraid of water ? ” Tintin asked sternly. Ambrosius laughed. This brief conversation with the trusting little chap pleased him in an extraordinary way. Tintin now sat down beside him on the stone seat and reflected open-mouthed.

“ Do you think that Pipo will have children when we get home again ? ” he asked earnestly.

“ When are you going home again ? ” Ambrosius enquired craftily.

“ Soon,” said Tintin ambiguously.

“ And who is Pipo ? ”

“ Pipo is the mother's name,” Tintin replied.

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"Your mother?"

"My mother! You are silly! My mother is Malee, of course. I mean the guinea-pig mother!"

"Oh, I see! Yes, she's sure to have children," said Ambrosius, forced to laugh. Suddenly Tintin jumped to his feet and ran away, calling:

"Here comes Malee!"

Ambrosius stood up quickly. He bowed and stood waiting as the woman came up to him. She was dressed in the same deep blue linen as Tintin, and her hair, too, lay heavy and damp across her forehead. She crossed the terrace with hurrying and yet hesitant steps, and then stood still a few paces away from Ambrosius and said softly, "Good morning."

"This young man and I have had a very interesting little colloquy," he said, somewhat embarrassed. He did not notice that he had used a pedantic expression. He did not notice that he was standing there bending forward in an attitude that was both expectant and awkward. He had become so unused to meeting people during his dark years.

"It is really you, Herr Professor," Helene said, stretching out her hands to which the salt coolness of the sea was still clinging. "You have changed a great deal—it must be the beard. But I recognised you immediately. I am so pleased—I don't quite know what to say——"

In her excitement her voice became hoarse, she cleared her throat, and looked at his glasses. "Don't you know me?" she asked warily, fearful for his eyes. "Your pupil, Willfüer."

"Why, yes, of course. Now I remember you. My famous pupil! So here you are. You have—developed greatly," said Ambrosius, half to himself.

He started to walk along beside her, at her right side, so as to keep his seeing eye turned towards her. And a

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feeling grew within him which he did not know whether to call joy or disappointment. Helene Willfüer, on the other hand, the scientist of established position, the director of a chemical works, was quite clear about the completely stupid, joyous and turbulent excitement in her heart. Here was Ambrosius again! This tower of a creature walking beside her, so close that she could feel his warmth. Here he was, striding beside her on this paradise of a seashore; he was alive; he was here; he could see! He looked into her face with a keen and searching glance. There was a look of surprise in his expression as though he saw something new, unknown, unsuspected.

"You have become—very great," he said, as he strolled along beside her beneath the green overhanging foliage, whilst Tintin sprang ahead like a small blue spark. "You have made a great career for yourself. You must find it a matter of great satisfaction to yourself, *gnädige Frau*?"

"Satisfying? Fairly. . . . Certainly. I have worked very hard during the winter. We have now found a cheaper method of preparing our 'Vitalin.' We shall now flood the market with it in large quantities at half the price, and with its nice popular name. Well, yes—satisfaction, perhaps. Yet there are moments when I could almost wish myself back in Köbellin's experimental hell. But in every life there is some unsatisfied want."

"Yes?" Ambrosius asked quickly, and turned his head towards her. The question embraced a great deal; things both half-realised and wholly unrealised. At heart this question meant: Are you really unsatisfied, you beautiful big feminine creature, with your chemical laboratory? But Ambrosius did not know that yet, and Helene did not understand it.

"I have been thinking about you a great deal here just

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lately," she said. "I am just reading your *Theory of Organic Chemistry*. It is a wonderful book."

"You are reading that? Here? Still only reading chemistry?"

"Oh—no. It is far more than just chemistry. In that book—I don't know how to express it—there is everything. Just everything."

"Do you think so? Then I am glad. Yes, perhaps it is true that one's experiences force their way out even in such scientific material as that. I worked on that book during my blackest period, when I could do nothing else but think and dictate. It was the straw which saved me from drowning. I am glad that you have found something to interest you in it. Moreover, I owe you a certain amount of thanks for making me write it."

"Me?"

"Yes, you. Your 'Vitalin.' I was quite done-for once. An empty sack, nothing else. And then in sheer desperation I took your medicine. And suddenly life came back to the body again. I could feel myself again, I found courage, I tried to work. At first it was no good. And then, quite slowly, it began. It is strange, very strange, to think that the soul will react to a pill! I would deny it, though I have proved it myself."

"Yes, we will deny it, Herr Professor. A dead soul will not react to any 'Testinucleose' or any 'Vitalin.' And a living soul will win through without pills. Can you see the sails? The wind is changing. Will you come sailing with me and Tintin this afternoon? Alessandro is taking us with him. He is Tintin's special friend."

"Rather! It is very kind of you to take an interest in me. I have become a hermit. It is a piece of luck that I met you here. You must take hold of me by the leading-rein and guide me among people again. How long are you staying here?"

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"Another fortnight. But that will be marvellous."

"Yes, I hope so. Your hand upon it. Oh, here we are at the house already. What a pity! May I invite myself to come and sit at your table, or is Valentin jealous?"

"Yes, he is jealous. But we won't take any notice of that this time. *Auf wiedersehen!*"

"*Auf wiedersehen!*—in an hour——"

Helene ran up the stairs to her room. She was quite beside herself. She choked with little helpless cries of joy. She opened a book, kissed it, threw it down. She fell on her bed, grasped the small pillow, the foreign bolster, pounded and pressed it, biting it, crying, laughing. She ran to the mirror, combed her hair with its white strand at the forehead away from her brow. She tore dresses out of the wardrobe and threw them about, and in the end she was standing naked before the mirror, her arms by her sides, quickly pulling on her dressing-gown when Tintin trotted in. She threw herself upon the defenceless and astonished Tintin, took him in her arms, pressed him to her heart, kissed his small head, his straight childish neck, his bare brown arms, that tasted of salt and the sea.

"What's the matter, Malee? Are you crazy?" Tintin asked sternly, and braced himself on his bronzed legs against this tempest of motherly tenderness.

"Nothing. Absolutely nothing," Malee answered with burning cheeks.

She was thirty-two years old. She had been alone all her life. She had never known love; only that tender, immature mistake of her youth. She had never known happiness yet. But now she was to be happy for fourteen whole days, completely, utterly, and entirely happy.

And Ambrosius?

With Ambrosius it began by his looking at his watch

more frequently. The hours spent with Helene were very short. The hours without her were very long. He contrived this and that to bring her near. Sometimes he would push his chair close up against the door which separated him from the adjoining room; then he could hear footsteps and their two voices. That passed the time a little. Or he would go down to the small harbour and have a short chat with the fisherman, Alessandro. He suffered himself to be told in the local dialect how good and beautiful the signora was; he believed that this occupation was only a means of improving his knowledge of the language. Then he wrote to a publisher in Munich and had fine reproductions of Feuerbach's picture sent to him by express messenger. When they arrived he sat bent over the prints for a long time, with a magnifying glass to his left eye, absorbing with strange sweet pleasure the lines of this female form. Yes, it was the same forehead, the same strong sweep of the eyebrows, the same characteristic of great but controlled sensuality about the nostrils. Only the lines of Helene's mouth were not so full, not so feminine, fashioned more by will power than the emotions. Ambrosius' thoughts turned frequently to this mouth. Sometimes he stared, lost in thought, at Helene's face, while she was talking, wanting to argue and discuss some problem. Suddenly she would fall silent, and her brown neck would flush, and a vein in her throat begin to pulse.


And in Tintin's face, too, Ambrosius sought traces of his mother, and he discovered with tender delight the same strong chin, the same expression in laughing, the same fine ears placed high and close to the head. He attached himself to Tintin during the hours that Helene remained invisible, and to feel the warm little hand in his, to see the taut eagerness of the little boyish figure, reminding him of the mother, made him content and happy.

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But soon it came about that they were scarcely ever apart, that they were together from early morning until late at night, close and warm and spiritually together: but always accompanied by Tintin: bound by inner bonds and vaguely troubled, but nevertheless bound closer and closer together day by day. And what marvellous days they were, those fourteen sunny Italian spring days, brilliant with sea and sky and luxuriant blossom. They bathed, they swam, they lay about on sun-warmed rocks, or sat lazily on a bench, their stone bench, which bordered the lowest terrace. They had their meals together. Helene peeled the fruit at the end. As she handed him a glass or a roll, Ambrosius would manage by some artful means to brush his fingers against hers, secretly, which made it all the sweeter. They sailed with Alessandro out into the bay. The love of sport awoke in Ambrosius and with muscles flexed beneath his silken shirt, he would give a helping hand. Helene watched this spectacle with secret and delighted glances. They strolled to Portofino along a hillside that was completely covered with blossoming wild myrtle and flaming yellow gorse bushes, casting a bewitching scent over the country. They climbed up to the chapel, lay down on the peak of a high-lying tongue of land where they could see the sea and bay on both sides. They lost themselves and abandoned themselves to all the blueness of water and sky and far-off hills.

Ambrosius grasped Helene's hand that was lying on a stone. But Helene, in a weak and helpless attack of fright, called Tintin, who had been picking violets, to come to them.

Silently they turned homewards. The tops of the cypresses were waiting expectantly, bowing humbly in the warm evening. Tintin was put to bed. Ambrosius had his supper alone, lost in dreams. Afterwards he sat



for a long time on a bench staring at the rock which stood out above the tide. It remained empty. He went to his room ; he listened ; he went on to his balcony. Nothing. Silence. Darkness next door. He sighed, smoked a cigar as solace. Meanwhile, Helene next door in her dark room was sitting on the edge of her bed immovable, her hands clasping her knees, not daring to breathe. She felt—she did not know how she felt. It seemed that with her first intake of breath something would happen, something very important, very strange. She went to bed and dreamed of Ambrosius. He lay down and dreamed of her. They met at breakfast. They talked about the chemical technique in the determination of blood groups, a theme which had been opened up in the last number of *Natural Science*.

But these were only subterfuges. These were only evasions. The scientific note in their conversation became more and more rare. A fortnight is a long time if it is completely filled. Two people can spread out their whole lives before one another in a fortnight, the beginning, the course, the goal, everything. They told one another a great deal and reached a perfect understanding of one another. And then there came those significant pauses, those loaded silences, that speechlessness in which it is almost possible to hear the beating of a heart ; that new, strong, oppressive beating which so impels the blood that it is felt in every vein. . . .

One night, it may have been the twelfth since his arrival, Ambrosius could not sleep, do what he would. He lay beneath his mosquito net, studying the pattern of the sky spread beyond his open balcony door filled with very near and twinkling stars. He lay in a turning tumult of visions and longings and he could find no method of dispelling them. He had tried to read, to smoke, he had counted up to a thousand and back

again. No good. No sleep. Only the great, the almost unbearable torment that these fourteen days were almost over, that nothing lasted for ever, and that afterwards he would be alone again, bound to his unhappy and stupid chemical life.

After a few hours Ambrosius had worried himself into a hot and resentful anger ; so he got up, bathed himself with cold water, dressed himself and decided to go down to the beach and spend the night there. The garden was full of a strange whispering, extravagant life : it throbbed from innumerable blossoms, exuded from innumerable stems, jagged the air with palm fronds. The small orange-tree spread its scent and fruit beneath it, the mimosa had scattered its golden pollen and stood there with closed leaves and exhausted flowers. This crowding life forced a sigh from the bottom of Ambrosius' heart. He found the terrace by a vague light that must have come from the myriad stars, for there was no moon to be seen. The Milky Way spread a shining veil, very low, over the sea. A silvery haze hung between the sky and the water, and each wave drew a gleaming line in the darkness. The breakers were dying away and singing with a gentle, deep, dark voice. Ambrosius sat down on the bench. He had come without his glasses and so saw a confused and dreamlike picture of the night. His hand could still feel the warmth of the sun stored up in the stone on which he leant his head. From time to time stars in great bunches like grapes fell from the sky into the sea in a cosmic wastefulness, and soon Ambrosius himself resolved into the night, like a solitary, circling world.

After an incalculable time a slight noise approached the terrace, and Ambrosius was startled to see a figure, light, and as though walking in its sleep, coming up from the sea. He recognised a woman with wet hair. She was wearing a thin silk dressing-gown, and her

throat sprang beautifully from the boyish turned-back collar.

"Helene, where do you come from?" he asked softly, without moving, almost breathless. He was afraid of himself and of this night.

"Out of the water. I had to go into the sea again," she answered, scarcely above a whisper, standing still a few paces from him.

"I did not see you——"

"But I saw you, sitting so quietly on our bench. Can't you sleep, either?"

"No. I can't."

A pause. Silence. Waiting.

"Won't you sit down? The stone is warm."

"I'd love to. I'm tired now from swimming. It's strenuous swimming against the stream."

"Yes. But you always liked swimming against the stream. Your hair—it's dripping—it's soaking wet."

"I beg your pardon—Herr Professor——"

And what now? Remain seated enveloped in this dangerous, choking dumbness? Talk rubbish, anything, however shallow or unreal, to break the spell? Or get up and go back into the house? Leave unsaid all that ought to be said, leave unaccomplished all that must be accomplished?

Ambrosius forced himself to action.

"Do you remember," he began with a subdued smile, "do you remember, Helene, when we talked once some time ago, about bypaths? At that time I took up the cudgels for bypaths, I praised them—and then they got hold of me and led me astray a long way. One can wander aimlessly about like that for years: sometimes in utter darkness, with no road before one at all. And then in the end everything turns out well, like a fairy story.

And one sees then that the bypaths have led in the right direction after all, in spite of everything ! ”

“ Yes——? ”

“ Listen, Helene,” he said, turning his eyes upon her, the blind eye with its white veil, and the seeing eye that had assumed an earnest and beseeching expression. “ I want to ask you something, Helene ; all this time I’ve wanted to. Listen ! Is there any man in your life——? ”

“ But I have got Tintin,” she said softly.

“ I’m not talking of those times. I am asking if you belong to anyone now ? ”

“ I belong to Tintin.”

“ Not to any man ? ”

Helene only smiled. Gently, almost in amazement, she shook her head.

“ I have too little time,” she said softly.

“ You have become a woman, Helene, a beautiful, mature woman. You have changed beyond belief since the time when you came to see me in your brown school-girl’s dress. Is it possible that in all these years, in all this time—what have you been doing all the while ? You have told me a great deal about your life. But I would like to know about the other part, too, the part you hide in silence. Is it possible that you live completely without love—with nothing but work—nothing but science ? Have you never felt anything else ? ”

Helene lifted her hands and peered into her palms. “ Once in my life I had an inkling of what love must be like. For a single second I was touched by something that was probably love,” she said slowly and, after a pause : “ But you would scarcely understand that.”

“ Tell me,” he said hoarsely.

“ Somebody once hung his coat over mine. His great big coat over my poor thin little raincoat. That was it. At that moment a shiver came over me, a fear, something

quite new. At that moment I felt everything at once : as though I were being protected by something big, and covered up : and there was also a great tenderness in it— and passion, too,” she added more softly.

Ambrosius was silent, lost in thought.

“ You saw me once in my weakest hour,” he said. “ That stuck in my throat for a long time. It turned me against you.”

“ Yes ? ”

“ Why did you call your child Valentin ? ” he asked insistently, and took her hands which were cool and trembling slightly.

She looked out to sea. “ I wonder,” she answered.

“ You know about my past life—and my marriage, Helene——.”

Helene was silent for a long time. “ I could not understand that—I have never understood it,” she murmured fearfully.

“ Are you so cold ? I know you now. I have studied every trait in you. You are not really cold, you do not know yourself yet. Has nobody ever touched you yet ? ”

“ No. I live behind glass walls,” she whispered, but she knew it was no longer true.

Now I am going to shatter your glass walls, thought Ambrosius, setting his teeth. He lifted his arm from the stone balustrade and laid it on Helene’s shoulder. He could feel the thin silk of her garment under his fingers, he could feel the unceasing, unceasing quivering of her body.

“ You’re shivering. Are you cold ? May I keep you warm ? ” he asked softly, drawing her closer to him. His arm was quivering now, too, but he did not lessen the increasing pressure which drew her to his shoulder. She closed her eyes and parted her lips.

“ Now it’s like—— ” she said thickly.

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"What is it like, my dear?"

"Like that time—like being beneath your cloak."

"Helene, listen to me. I'm not going to let you go away again. You must come with me. You must drop everything and stay with me. No more bypaths. Our time has come. You will help me, someone must help me. I see so badly. I have become so clumsy. I have got a great work before me. I can't carry it out without you. I can't do without you any longer," Ambrosius whispered, close to her face. It sounded almost like a command in his excitement.

Helene was silent. She stared out into the wheeling, shimmering star-lit night: in her, too, there was a formless surge of emotion, drifting, incalculable, sweeping away all resistance. She pulled herself together. She kept a tight hold on herself. She did not quite understand. She snatched at her hard, hard existence, and clung to it.

"I don't know," she said weakly. "I don't think I can do that. I am so used to being independent. I must work independently. I don't think I'm cut out to be an assistant."

Ambrosius looked at her in amazement. He put his two hands round her face and drew it close to his eyes. Slowly a smile spread over his face—laughter, immense, relieving, deep, hearty laughter.

"You stupid girl," he said, close to her lips. "I don't mean chemistry. I mean life. Will you share your life with me?"

Helene laid her large trembling hands on his breast, and with a deep intake of breath, she answered: "It's an experiment. I will try it."